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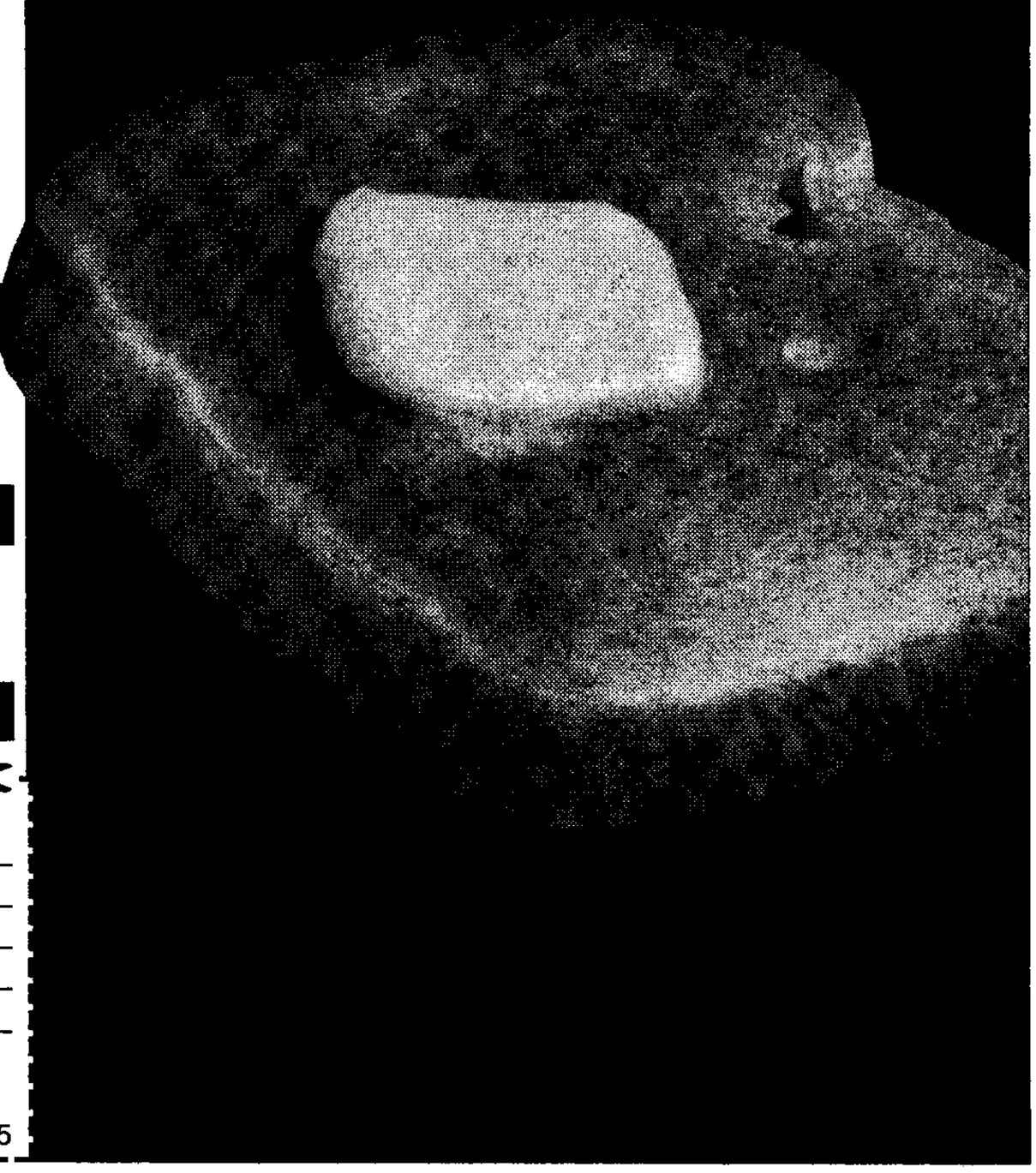

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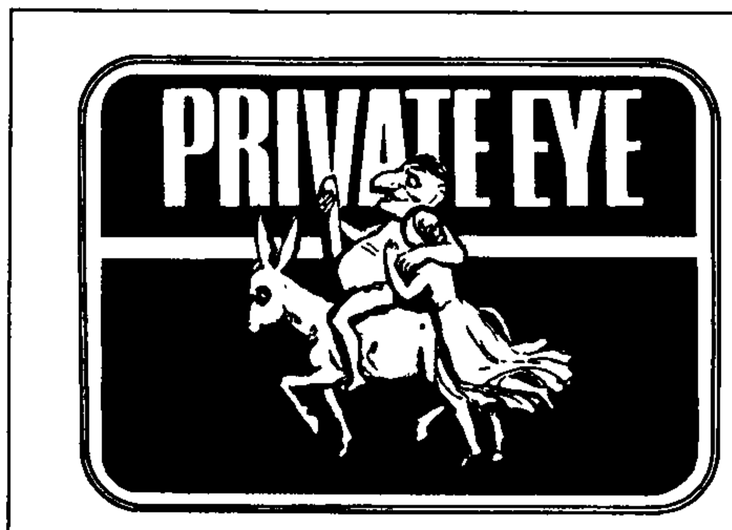
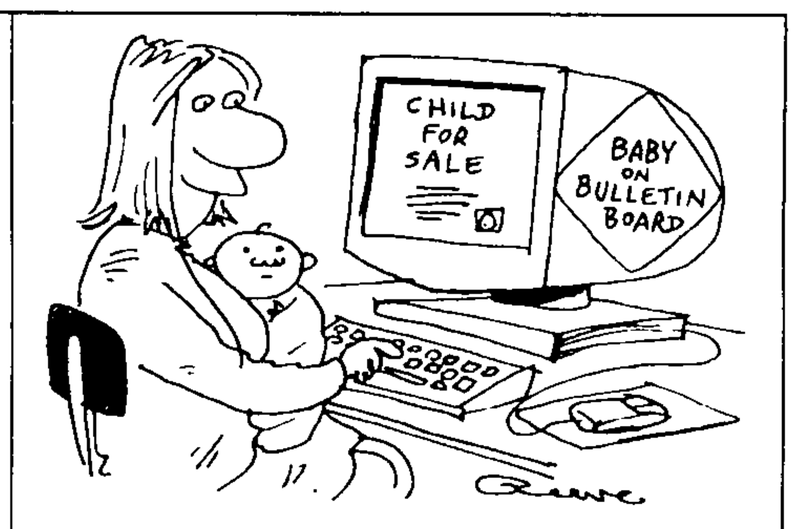




THE gruesome picture of bodies laid out in a makeshift mortuary in the chapel of rest at Bedford Hospital gave politicians and the media ample opportunity to feign outrage.

"Sickening" screamed the *Mirror.* "The final indignity" blasted the *Mail.* Health secretary Alan Milburn was quick to clear his department of any blame, describing the situation as "totally and utterly unacceptable" and pointing the finger at "a management problem in the hospital". The Tory health spokesman Dr Liam Fox lost the plot completely, ranting and raving: "This has blown the lid on the Government's incestuous and corrupt running of the NHS".

So it would be embarrassing for these luminaries of page and parliament if the photograph were shown to have been "tweaked". According to porters at Bedford Hospital, this is exactly what happened. There is a widespread feeling in the hospital that someone with access to the chapel of rest, who did not feel they owed the management any favours, entered the room before the photographer and made a couple of crucial alterations to what he or she found there – uncovering the feet of one corpse, and placing a rubbish bin next to the bodies to create an impression of carelessness and squalor.

There have been strained relations between the chief executive of Bedford, Ken Williams, and some members of staff ever since Williams sacked Monica Carmichael, a cardiology technician and MSF shop steward, following an independent external enquiry. Ms Carmichael's action for unfair dismissal was due to be heard before an employment tribunal next month. Intriguingly Alan Milburn was a full-time officer of the white collar MSF union before he entered parliament.

Whatever the truth about the photo, it soon became clear that one man's head was going to roll. On Sunday 14 January, the day the picture first appeared in the *Bedfordshire on Sunday* and the *Sunday Telegraph*, Williams received a call from the NHS chief executive, Nigel Crisp, telling him he had to go. An internal inquiry headed by the director of the NHS Eastern Region, Peter Houghton, did not even begin until the next day. Houghton has shown himself to be a creature of Milburn, echoing the minister's statements in parliament in his statements to the press, referring to "totally unacceptable practice at Bedford NHS Trust" and laying all the blame at the feet of the hospital management.

There is seldom much love lost between the medical staff and chief executive of a hospital, but consultants at Bedford were quick to pass a resolution expressing their belief that Williams was scapegoated. On Friday 19 January the hospital's chairman, Professor Andy Blowers, told a meeting of consultants that the powers that be gave Williams no choice but to resign. Williams can hold little hope in the external inquiry which began two days after his resignation. As NHS regional director, the man with ultimate responsibility for the report soon to be presented to the health minister is once again Peter Houghton.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"A 'SLIMY' boss offered a pretty teenage cleaner £6,000 to strip naked in his office, the girl claimed yesterday."

— Front-page splash, *Daily Star* (prop: Richard Desmond), 17 January.

"It's hard to believe that we found Shaheeda in the slums of Bombay in India. She was begging in the streets so we offered her $100 to strip for us."

— Fantasy.121 website (prop: Richard Desmond).

IN THE TEAROOM

THE gift of £5m from Stuart Wheeler (with a hint of more to come) may not win the Tories the general election but it's a fair bet it settles the leadership question. It's pretty unlikely that there are any millionaires out there who are so impressed with the political skills of Ann Widdecombe, Michael Portillo or Francis Maude that they'd be prepared to fork-out on so generous a scale.

In the days before the Wheeler bequest was announced even some hardened Eurosceptics were beginning to talk themselves round to the idea of a Ken Clarke leadership after the expected debacle. Sure they'd have to hold their noses; but at least they'd have a crack at office next time round. But now the City bookie has said he wouldn't fork out for a pro-European, Clarke's political stock has gone sharply easier.

That means the Conservatives are likely to be stuck with William Hague for another five years. By June this year they may already be wishing they had never heard of Mr Wheeler and his chequebook.

A number of the more analytically-minded central office staffers are refusing to accept Wheeler at face value and have been wracking their brains to work out his true motive. The donor has made it clear that he won't take a peerage and (beyond the Europe question) isn't trying to dictate policy. Yet the notion that William Hague is an inspiring and able politician is such a maverick view, even at the higher levels of his own party, that only an old Etonian eccentric could conceivably hold it.

But Wheeler, as everyone knows, has his head screwed on. He is also an expert in political form. His company, IG Index, launched its "Cabinet Index" as early as 1994 and has made a bundle by being consistently smarter than the average punter. Both Michael Portillo and Hezza's failure to supplant John Major helped make Wheeler rich in the first place. So why is he really handing over the money?

The consensus at Smith Square is that Wheeler is really driven by an insatiable desire to wipe that self-satisfied smirk off Tony Blair's face. Senior Tories are convinced that it's not Hague's merits that have won them the cash; rather that the prime minister's smugness functions as such a powerful psychic irritant that it can drive a man to throw away ten million quid.

'Urquhart'

Street Of Shame

ONCE again the *Independent* took the lead over other newspapers in exposing the environment minister Michael Meacher's sizeable property portfolio.

The *Indy's* seasoned political hackette Fran Abrams worked hand in hand with the investigative television programme, the *Mark Thomas Product*, to reveal that Meacher, who has criticised second-home owners for making it difficult for first-time buyers in rural areas to get a foothold in the market, owns at least nine properties himself.

The paper was due to run with the story on its front page on Wednesday 17 January, when events took a curious turn. Even though the article had been passed by the lawyers, it did not meet with the approval of editor Simon Kelner. A stand-up row with the political editor ensued and the story duly appeared in, er, the *Guardian* on Saturday 20 January, where it was described as "a joint investigation by the *Guardian* and the Mark Thomas Product TV programme". Surely thé *Indy* didn't turn down a perfectly good story on the basis of a phone call from a certain Mr Campbell?

SPARE a thought for poor Paul "I know nothing about newspapers" Ashford, Richard Desmond's hapless sidekick from Northern & Shell who is now editorial supremo at the *Express*.

For several years, it seems, Ashford's wife has been under the impression that Desmond's publishing empire consisted of serious journals such as *OK!* and *International Musician*. It was only when Dirty Des took over the *Express*, and other papers drew attention to such delights as *Asian Babes* and fantasy121.com, that the penny dropped.

Mrs Ashford, being a respectable woman, is none too pleased to realise that her hubby's boss is in fact a major-league pornographer. And her disapproval is apparently shared by Ashford's mother and father. So it's probably just as well Ashford stayed at home over Christmas while Mrs A. went off to stay with his parents.

Luckily for Ashford, it seems that Dirty Des is becoming embarrassed by the ceaseless publicity given to his knicker-sniffing enterprises. Hence his decision to put his "adult" magazines up for sale. But will there be any takers?

As the *Eye* pointed out last month, the wank-mags actually lost £870,000 last year. True, his porn-TV operation, the Fantasy Channel, made a profit of £2.6m – but Desmond insists this isn't for sale. Which makes his price-tag of £20m seem more than a little optimistic. Most of Desmond's mags are, er, "specialist" titles – *50 & Over*, *Big & Fat*, etc – are hacked out on the cheap by overworked minions and sell very few copies. The newest magazine, *Young & Old*, is supposed to consist of old men and young women, or vice versa, but due to swingeing budget cuts it can't afford to pay for male "models"; so the chap who runs most of Desmond's porn ventures, Deric Botham, now has to star in his own magazine about four or five times an issue.

The only title with any credbility is *Forum*, whose former contributors include the Riviera gigolo himself, Alastair Campbell. Perhaps he might be interested in buying it...

HACKS at the *Express*'s Grey Lubyanka, already shell-shocked by the reappearance of ghastly old Fleet Street lags such as Ian Monk and Jonathan Holborow, are even more alarmed by Richard Desmond's blossoming friendship with Kelvin MacKenzie.

Apparently it was MacFrenzy who advised Desmond to hire *Sun* soccer scribe Brian "Woolly" Woolnough for the *Daily Star* at a wallet-boggling £200,000 salary, more than double his Wapping pay cheque. It was also Kelvin who, over a convivial dinner at the Savoy, persuaded Desmond to recruit the disgraced City Slicker Anil Bhoyrul as the *Star*'s City editor.

The alleged justification for Woolly's sky-high pay deal is that he may lose a lucrative sideline broadcasting on Sky TV because he's joined a Murdoch competitor. *Sun* sports staff wonder if his defection will also jeopardise his regular slots on MacKenzie's talkSport radio station, given that Rupert is a major shareholder in the enterprise. Could it be, they ask, that fear of upsetting the Dirty Digger is the real reason Kelvin's being so coy about his role advising the Dirty Desmond on how to take on the Murdoch tabloids?

SELL OUT SHOCK

FEBRUARY is tipped as show time for the department of trade inquiry into the *Mirror*'s City Slickers inquiry, the odds said to be strongly in favour of action against Anil Bhoyrul, which may yet dent his chances of making a comeback at the *Daily Star*.

Ill-health factors could save his partner in crime, James Hipwell, though how they can be separated in their spivvery is hard to see. Especially for a jury.

Meanwhile, the position of their sponsor and biggest fan, *Mirror* editor Piers Morgan, is still uncertain. Which will ease the anxieties and potential embarrassment of those social friends of "Moron" who may find themselves dragged undeservedly into the scandal. Such as the director of a certain north London premiership club – not Sir Alan Sugar – with whom "Moron" may have discussed the Slickers' share tips.

At the paper, Moron's fate now hinges on a tug-of-loyalty split among Trinity Mirror directors and senior executives. The Morgan-must-go lobby believe it will be less damaging for the *Mirror*'s image if they have already parted company with the tainted editor before full details of the DTI inquiry are published. They are also advocating a PR offensive to limit the damage, which would stress that current chief exec Philip Graff and the Trinity Mirror board merely inherited Moron and his City Slicker pals when they took over the Mirror Group.

That, of course, wouldn't apply to the current chairman Sir Victor Blank, who was already at Canary Wharf. In his case the spin strategy would be to portray Sir Victor as a City grandee badly let down by the pisspoor judgement of former chief exec David "Rommel" Montgomery, who was responsible for hiring Morgan and sanctioning the creation of the Slickers' column.

Alas, this cunning scheme fails to explain away Trinity Mirror's own feeble whitewash of an internal inquiry into Slickergate, or Sir Victor's gushing and ill-advised public defences of Moron as a brilliant, blameless editor. Nor does it deal with another looming headache: what to do with all those other executives and hacks who were "filling their boots" during the Slickers' share-ramping heyday at the expense of innocent *Mirror* readers.

THE latest circulation boosting brainwave from the *Daily Mail* is the offer of a free personal horoscope from Princess Diana's astrologer for every reader who can be bothered to collect the requisite number of tokens.

Mail readers tempted by this celestial free gift would do well to remember that Debbie Frank, who "helped shape Diana's life through the in-depth study of her birth chart", failed to predict one rather major event in the life of her most famous client. Namely... *that* Paris car crash.

NIGEL Dempster's impressive range of contacts was demonstrated once again on 15 January with his great scoop about the French model-turned-actress Laetitia Casta.

Humpty Dumpster appeared to have quotes from at least two sources slating Casta's performance in a new Spanish film, *Gypsy*. "'Her lines had to be dubbed into a strong Andalusian accent. It makes her performance almost unwatchable,' I am told," reported Nigel. However, there were compensations: "'She plays a two-timing wife – and the sex scenes are appropriately animal,' admits a fan."

The *Eye* can exclusively reveal the identities of Dumpster's anonymous sources. They are in fact one man, American film critic Jonathan Holland, who reviewed *Gypsy* in the 4 January edition of the Hollywood trade paper *Variety*.

Holland's review was sent out on Reuters, which has a syndication deal with *Variety*, and also mentioned in the *New York Post*'s "Page Six" gossip column. A few days later Dempster simply disguised lines from the review as quotes from his own confidential "sources".

Is this rare lapse in journalistic standards a result of pressure to fit more showbiz exclusives in? And can this mean that Dumpster has belatedly realised that the public's fascination with stories about Princess Margaret, Dai Llewellyn and Luis Bastardo may be waning – and that even a rehashed review of an obscure foreign language film, not yet released in Britain or America, is a better bet than another scoop about Tara Palmer-Bonkinson?

> Researchers have found that men in urban areas are 62 per cent more likely to die than those in the country, small towns or suburbs.
>
> *Daily Telegraph*

BRENDA HAYWOOD, group executive editor of Conrad Black's *Telegraph* titles, has come up with a brilliant new wheeze to force hacks to tighten their belts: bribe their bosses. In a "secret" memo last week she offered heads of department a personal reward of £5,000 if their department managed to stay within its budget for the year.

Some section heads have been upset by this potentially divisive request. And Chris Boffey, the *Sunday Telegraph*'s news editor, has special cause for distress: although his colleagues stand to get £5,000, for some reason he has been offered a mere £3,000.

A MOST important announcement has been posted on the *Daily Telegraph* noticeboard by the company's chief executive, Dan Colson:

"The Database Department has until now tended to be principally externally focused. While the Database Department will continue to have an external role, we will be shifting the emphasis to include a wider internal remit to build relationships with the *Telegraph*'s core business. To this end, we will forge closer links with HTNM, Direct Marketing (including APP), Enterprises, Marketing, Advertising and Circulation. External relationships will continue but in harmony with the rest of the company."

Alas, no one has the slightest idea what it means. A small prize has now been offered for the first *Torygraph* hack to crack the code and translate Colson's gibberish into something resembling English.

THE internet recruitment database, workthing.com, was recently voted website of the week by the *Guardian's* secretarial supplement, Office Hours.

Grauniad hackette Merope Mills raved about the site and why it stands out from its competitors: "Rather than trying to satisfy all workers with the same advice and info, the website has a network of different sites for different industries – media, IT, health, etc. Within each section they give you latest news, a weekly lowdown, a people profile and industry views."

Ms Mills fails to mention, however, that the owner of workthing.com is none other than, er, the Guardian Media Group.

> *Anyone, military or civilian, who served in Bosnia or Kosovo will be offered free health screening to try to put their minds at risk.*
>
> *Daily Mail*

TEARS will be shed throughout Fleet Street and the Square Mile at the news that top City PR man Brian Basham has fallen out with his dear chum and shooting partner, financial hack Dominic Prince.

The beautiful friendship was ended when *Sunday Business* rang Basham to ask if it was true that he had accidentally killed an owl while out shooting. It was not true at all, and a furious Basham set out to discover who was responsible for this grave calumny. Clouseau-style investigations led him to conclude (wrongly) that Prince must have leaked the story to *Sunday Business*, and he promptly fired off an indignant letter.

"Dear Dominic, The fact that you look like the Owl of the Fourth Remove doesn't give you a monopoly on stories about owls, particularly when they are untrue... Even allowing for your talent for inaccuracy, dissembling and invention, this is all pretty ripe... I did not shoot the bird but, even had I done so, it would still have been a vile act for you to have attempted to sell the story. I know times are hard but you can't be that short of a few bob. Anyway, I've decided that I can't continue to be a member of a shoot where other guns behave in such a manner."

Sic transit Basham. One would need a heart of stone not to weep.

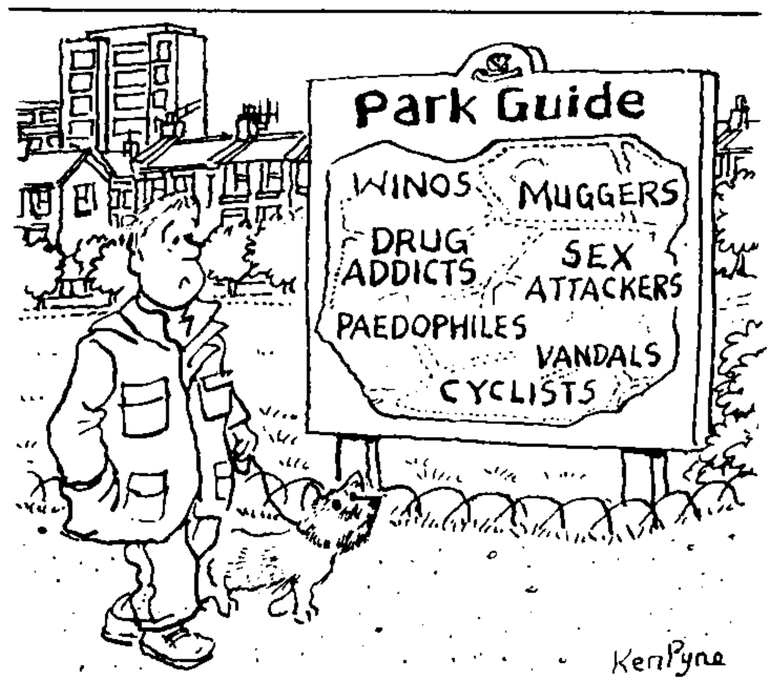
IT SEEMS that Damien McCrystal, the bibulous financial hack who writes the diary and restaurant column for *Sunday Business*, is nursing political ambitions: last Thursday he delivered a speech to the Dirty Dozen, an upmarket dining club of Conservative Party apparatchiks and think-tankers.

In a wide-ranging speech, he made a number of interesting suggestions, including: independence for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland ("all economically worthless"); all taxes to be cut to 10%, turning England into the greatest tax haven in the world; school-leaving age to be reduced to 11; the NHS to be abolished; the sterilisation of habitual criminals and, in the meantime, "electro-magnetic hobbling" for those with a criminal record, so as to cripple offenders for the duration of their sentence.

Can it be long before Ann Widdecombe hires this brave and talented hack as her special adviser?

OH, YEAH? "I met Princess Margaret 40 years ago, almost to the month, and we have remained constant friends ever since. I like to think I am one of a group whose prime concern is to protect the Princess by our silence."

— Angela Huth, at the start of a 3,500-word feature "Margaret, my very private friend" in the *Daily Hellograph*



CHARITY NEWS

MOST newspapers carried pictures of Muhammed Ali attending the so-called World Sports Awards at the Albert Hall last week. The black-tie gala night – complete with dire jokes from compere Roger Moore and a celebrity-stuffed audience – raised $1m for worthy sporting charities.

What was not reported was that the whole strange shindig cost Austrian Red Bull multi-millionaire Dietrich Mateschitz at least $10m, including five-figure appearance fees for stars such as Marion Jones and Michael Johnson, and a $1m fee to Ali. Wouldn't it have been simpler to bung the $10m straight to the charities in the first place?

HACKWATCH

The Big Story

WHERE do stories come from? Youngsters eager to go into journalism, who often ask this question, need look no further than the latest Kate Winslet Sensation: it's a perfect example of the reverse-alchemy whereby one nugget of news can be transformed into several tons of base metal, thus keeping dozens of desperate hacks in gainful employment.

First, the "story" itself. Winslet, promoting her new film, gives an interview to the *Radio Times* in which she mentions that she needs to lose some weight. Not a particularly startling revelation, given that she recently had a baby. In Fleet Street, however, the news breaks like a thunderclap over a parched landscape.

"Titanic Kate Goes on a Diet," yells a headline on page 2 of the *Daily Telegraph*. The *Sun*'s report is accompanied by a 1,000-word analysis from slimming editor Sally Ann Voak. "Kate's decision to diet at such a dangerous time — just three months after the birth of her daughter Mia — is amazing," she wails.

The *Grauniad*, ready as ever with a statistic, notes that "a report published by the British Medical Association last year on the link between eating disorders and the media found that actresses had an average of 10 percent less body fat than healthy women". *Eating disorders?* All Winslet said was that "I'd like to get a bit of the baby weight off". But the *Daily Mail* accuses her of joining "the Hollywood waif brigade", and wheels out a posse of experts — a consultant in adolescent psychiatry, the president of the National Childbirth Trust, a spokesman for the British Nutrition Foundation — to warn of the terrible consequences.

The day after these initial salvoes, the *Sun* blames her for piling "yet more pressure on teenagers" to get slim. The *South Wales Evening Post* ingeniously finds a local angle, implying that Kate may single-handedly precipitate an epidemic of anorexia throughout the principality: "A Swansea eating disorder expert is worried that impressionable teenagers may believe they have to be thin to be successful, after diet-hating actress Kate Winslet admitted she must lose weight." The *Daily Record* seeks out yet another expert, Bar Hewlett of The Obesity Awareness and Solutions Trust (TOAST — geddit?): "Kate Winslet is under society's pressure to conform to a nonsense shape...It shows what our society has become now."

But enough of the experts. It's time to bring out the heavy artillery of Glenda Slagg and Polly Filler. "For a girl who says she loathes diets," Sue Carroll sneers in the *Mirror*, "Kate Winslet seems to be weighed down by the matter." One of Scotland's top Glendas, Marian Pallister of the Glasgow *Herald*, pens a lengthy column advising Kate to stop "blubbing about the blubber" and "beating herself about her well-padded shoulders". Madonna and Catherine Zeta-Jones have "worked their butts off" to shed post-pregnancy pounds; Kate, too, should "knuckle under" and stop whingeing. Meanwhile, the London *Evening Standard* commissions a 1,400-word why-oh-why piece from feminist pundit Joan Smith. "Winslet embodies the dilemma of ordinary women in extreme form," she reveals. "We like women with lots of flesh and with whom we can identify."

By 14 January the Sunday papers are ready to launch a new offensive. India Knight fires off 1,000 words in the *Sunday Times*, even-handedly attacking both skinny women ("I am powerfully reminded of people in concentration camps") and fat women ("grossly unhealthy"). "I'm sad about Kate Winslet, though... The glorious, beautiful, pre-diet Kate Winslet could eat Ally McBeal for breakfast. And oh, how I wish she would." The *Sunday Telegraph* carries a huge news-feature about the "staggering admission" by Winslet that her clothes no longer fit her. "Kate Winslet's surrender to a dieting regime last week captured the mood of the nation," it claims.

Not to be outdone the *Observer*'s domestic goddess Nigella Lawson also devotes her column to the "hot news" about Winslet but manages to omit the only significant bit of news that the actress has recently had a baby. "The pitiful truth is that most of us do feel better for losing weight... There is no point in poor Kate Winslet's holding on to the extra pounds in the hope that we'll like her for it."

Poor Kate Winslet indeed. Having been shot at for days by Fleet Street's finest, she may have assumed that there would now be a ceasefire. But there's one more sniper wanting to take a potshot. "She sure does whine about her weight," Tony Parsons writes in Monday's *Mirror*. "Get on your exercise bike and stop moaning, Kate. Or there's always a sequel to Free Willy." Parsons's loathing of fat women may not be unrelated to his interminable feud with his ex-wife, the generously proportioned Julie Burchill. Silly Kate: couldn't she have thought of this before speaking to the *Radio Times*?

The Big Mistake

"The *Mirror* always tries to get things right but we are not perfect." With this resounding understatement Piers Moron announced on 9 January that his rag was appointing a Readers' Editor (dope-addled political hack David Seymour) and launching a corrections column, For The Record.

"We will not include trivial complaints," Moron added. "Only significant mistakes about facts will be covered." Here are some of the profoundly significant errors which have so far been deemed worthy of correction:

10 January: "The Princess Alice which sank in the Thames in 1878 went down at Beckton, not Limehouse Reach."

11 January: "Something is either unique or not, so it is impossible for something to be 'almost unique', which sadly appeared in Voice of the Mirror on Monday."

12 January: "The animal which escaped from an abattoir in Tabley, Cheshire, is a sow, not a boar, as was claimed on page 21 on 3 January."

13 January: "The two characters who appeared with Pikachu in the A List last week were not from Pokemon but from Digimon. Of course, the boy pictured was Tye, who has brown hair, and not Ash Ketchum, who has black hair and wears a baseball cap."

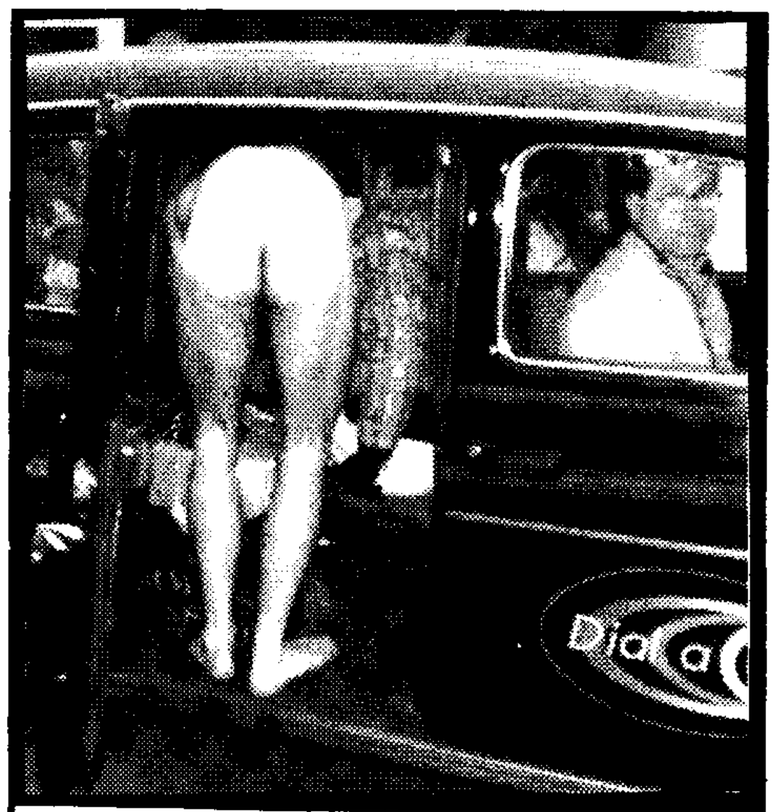
15 January: "Major the police dog lost his left eye, not his right, while on duty at the Swansea-Bristol football match (*Welsh Mirror*, 12 January, page 11)."

17 January: "Yesterday's letter from a reader about toilet paper in the 1940s should not have said strips of newspaper were hung outside the lavatory. It should have said that they were hung inside the outside lavatory."

18 January: "The boy Digimon character spells his name Tai, as in T'ai Chi, the Chinese martial art devised in the Song dynasty, and not Tye (*For The Record*, Saturday)."

Well done, Piers! As he informed readers when launching the column: "There are bound to be times when we slip up... And we are not afraid to admit it." Yet we still await an admission from the Readers' Editor that Moron and his colleagues "slipped up" by buying shares before they were tipped in the *Mirror*. Does he believe this scandal too "trivial" to merit inclusion? Or is it simply that no reader has yet lodged a complaint?

It would be unfair and childish to bombard the wretched Readers' Editor with letters asking about Piers's involvement in the City Slickers affair. But if *Eye* readers wish to do so, Lord Gnome is powerless to prevent them.



The Princess, usually happy to go out, has spent most of the past three weeks in bed

The Times

IF depleted uranium shells used in the Kosovo conflict do turn out to be deadly, it's not only Serbians, Kosovans and Nato troops who need worry: trade minister Richard Caborn is working hard to get British firms into Serbia to win construction contracts under the "Yugoslavia Task force".

Britain put such effort into destroying Yugoslavia's civilian infrastructure that British firms obviously deserve the right to make a few quid building it up again. But any advance guard of engineers and accountants may be rushing into an irradiated area.

Building firm AMEC is currently searching for contracts in the "energy sector", restarting bombed out power stations. A consortium of Scottish waste management firms hopes to run Serbia's rubbish dumps.

Anglian Water meanwhile is close to signing a quarter of a million pound deal to put a pipeline on the Varadin Bridge in Novi Sad, thanks to a memorandum of understanding signed by Caborn. Varadin was the first of the bridges destroyed by Nato. Anglian of course is well used to dealing with all kinds of pollution. For the second year running it is in the UK Environment Agency's "top ten" most prosecuted and fined UK polluters, currently at number 2 with £71,250 worth of fines.

"Spare an old soldier the price of a lawyer, guv?"

MYSTERY surrounds the departure of former Number 10 insider Mark Adams from lobbyists the Communications Group and his planned new venture – a public affairs consultancy (ie lobbying outfit) he hopes to launch as "Foresight Communications".

Adams has told friends he plans to recruit a "prominent Fleet Street political editor"; but the same friends are keen to dispel any notion that the hack in question could be Adams' old mucker Simon Walters of the *Mail on Sunday*.

The two are certainly close, however. Political editor Walters made special mention of Adams, thanking him in the frontispiece of his political bodice ripper, *Second Term* – a work of fiction dwelling on the fratricidal world of "new" Labour. Actual "foresight", though, is something Mark Adams may be in short supply of.

Before Christmas the *Guardian* linked him to a series of explosive and highly damaging leaks of cabinet minutes – or rather, it was implied, a record of cabinet meetings recorded as private notes. Never before had hugely sensitive and confidential records of cabinet meetings been leaked to the press in this way, and Tony Blair was incandescent.

The leaked "minutes" from Labour's early period in office were serialised in, oddly enough, the *Mail on Sunday*. They revealed deep splits at the heart of government over the dome and over Gordon Brown's first budget. Ministers with an axe to grind were immediately blamed, yet many of the elementary errors in the published "minutes" seemed to point the finger elsewhere.

With many in Downing Street still believing Adams to have been the culprit behind the cabinet leak, it is unlikely he will be able to boast many of their names in any "key figures and opinion formers" contacts book for prospective clients.

HOW to explain the return of the Westminster gerrymanderer Lady Shirley Porter to the mainstream media, gracing almost a full page of the *Sunday Times* with her millionaire son?

Though both have always been hardline Tories, one clue must be their dedication to the Labour government in general and to Tony Blair in particular. The younger Porter even lets it be known that he is considering joining the club of millionaire donors to Labour, and la Porter herself says Blair is "fantastic".

Can any of this have anything to do with the long drawn-out case taken out some years ago by the Westminster district auditor John McGill against Porter and many of her former henchpeople at Westminster? McGill found comprehensively that Porter and Co had wasted millions of pounds of council money on their vote-rigging schemes and should be surcharged.

Porter stormed off to the high court flanked by left-wing barristers, but the court found against them and imposed a surcharge on Porter and one of the leading councillors. She slunk off to Israel, out of the jurisdiction of the surchargers, but took her case on to the court of appeal.

Three judges there were unusually split on the issue. One found for McGill but two found for Porter and allowed her appeal against the surcharge. McGill and his employers, the audit commission, were shocked at the verdict and decided to appeal to the House of Lords. The audit commission confirms to the *Eye* that the appeal is expected "very soon". Nothing whatever to do with the *Sunday Times* splurge, naturally.

THE government's strategy for sport, "A sporting future for all", says widespread participation in sport provides "enjoyment, health, ambition and fun for millions of people", and that "it is the star performers of today who stimulate interest and provide examples to get everyone interested in sport".

Sports minister Kate Hoey was recently seen putting theory into practice when she presented the trophy at a healthy and fun major sporting event – the World Darts Championship sponsored by, er, the merchants of death, Embassy Tobacco Ltd.

THE national audit office (NAO) report into the proposed privatisation of London Underground was widely and accurately reported as a blow to deputy prime minister John Prescott's plans. What was not so widely understood is how sternly the report rebuked the country's biggest accountant, PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC).

The basis of the government case for the "public private partnership" rests on the imaginary "public sector comparator". This is a projection of how the tube would run in public hands. If the price of the "public sector comparator" is higher than the PPP bids, privatisation makes financial sense. However, the NAO found that the "public sector comparator" was consistently inflated and the savings from privatisation exaggerated.

This is rather shaming for accountants from PWC, the financial adviser to both Prescott and London Transport. They helped create and verify the comparator. The NAO found that some of the comparator estimates were "improbable". And many of its assumptions were skewed.

By contrast the audit found that private bidders were always put in a sunny light. The risk that legal disputes may arise under the PPP approach has "not been quantified formally", despite widespread evidence of legal battles around the PFI process scaring government departments. Perhaps most striking, the NAO found that the comparator was so complex it could "generate several hundred possible values". Commenting on the baroque nature of the comparator, the NAO noted: "It is difficult to be sure that there has been no double-counting".

PS: Last year transport minister Keith Hill revealed to parliament that up to September 2000 £69.4m had been paid out to external consultants on the tube sell-off. The money was divided between PriceWaterhouseCoopers and lawyers Freshfields. London Transport estimates the final cost of the faulty advice will be £92m.

It is difficult to see why the government put so much faith in PwC to advise it in the first place. PwC advertises its experience in rail transport work by boasting that it "evaluated options for privatising London Underground and assisted in the programme of restructuring to introduce concessions". On the same page its notes that it has been "engaged in restructuring and privatisation of the UK rail industry for over 10 years", including "advising BR on structural models for privatisation and assisted in the policy review with UK government".

So PwC's main qualification for selling off the tube is its expertise in the nightmare creation of Railtrack. In fact the firm underestimates its influence in building Railtrack. Sir Christopher Foster, of Coopers & Lybrand, one of PwC's constituent firms, advised former Tory transport secretary John MacGregor on how to flog off the railways. He very smoothly and suddenly moved from advising the government to sitting on the board of Railtrack itself, until his retirement last July. Foster remains an adviser to the board of PriceWaterhouseCoopers.

GET ready for a rush of last minute retirement announcements from over the hill Labour MPs who have been promised sinecures in the Lords or on some regional quango – all in return for awarding the right to Millbank to shoo-in loyal and reliable candidates to rock solid "old" Labour seats.

From next month Millbank will be able to force "centrally agreed" lists of candidates on local members where the MP has announced his or her "surprise retirement". James Purnell, a member of the Downing Street policy unit, who would rather not be remembered for his role in having leftwinger Liz Davies blocked from standing for parliament at the last election, is himself hoping to, er, stand for parliament. He is on course to succeed Tom Pendry in Stalybridge and Hyde, having launched a local charm offensive while presumably keeping quiet about his earlier record as the leader's nark.

Another policy unit wonk, David Milliband, is reported to be taking a keen interest in Giles Radice's old industrial seat in County Durham. That interest may intensify now Radice has announced his intention to "step down" at the next election.

NO ONE supports competition in industry with greater fervour than the new treasurer of the Tory party, Michael Ashcroft.

So it is sad to report that his Thatcherite credentials are being sorely tested in the small Central American country of Belize, where Ashcroft spent some of his youth and where he now owns the biggest bank and is a loyal supporter of the Peoples United Party government.

Last year he bought a controlling interest in Belize Telecommunications Ltd and with it the effective control of all the country's communications. The company is extremely profitable. Last year it shelled out $10m in dividends. When another free enterprise-loving Belize businessman began selling a box which enabled people to make calls on the internet, however, Ashcroft's company blocked access to the site even though it was in Los Angeles. The businessman got a court injunction forcing Ashcroft's company to lift the blockade.

To stop this sort of competitive nonsense in the future Ashcroft has asked for a 20-year extension of his company's monopoly when it runs out in 2003. His friends in the ruling party are not at all happy about this demand, so Ashcroft, according to the US magazine *Forbes*, "may be looking for new friends" – in the official opposition. By lucky chance the opposition party chairman, Dean Barrow, is a partner in the legal firm that represents Ashcroft's bank.

EIGHTEEN months after the *Eye* first highlighted the £118m computer debacle engulfing the probation service, the national audit office (NAO) is to release a report damning the home office's handling of the affair.

A draft circulating last week revealed that, despite the system's failure to do its job – ie keep track of offenders – costs spiralled upwards to 70 percent over budget.

Even worse, however, it seems the home office has became locked in an illegal and restrictive contract with Bull, the French IT company. The home office audit and assurance unit is now investigating "the value for money" of the agreement which gives Bull £5.4m a year for support and maintenance of the system.

The NAO report is just the latest in a series highlighting flaws in a system that couldn't keep track of criminals' aliases and was a "nightmare" to use.

None of this surprises Napo, the probation officers' union, which warned the home office six years and many millions of pounds ago that the system was not worth the programme it was written on.

Number crunching.

10% Home Office estimate of how much more effective (and cheaper to run) Community Service is than prison.

10% Expected rise of Britain's prison population between now and March 2002.

FAKE salmon farmers defend themselves by playing the job creation card which works with politicians every time.

On 5 January Scottish Quality Salmon (SQS), mouthpiece of this foreign-owned dirty business, issued a press release about the "manufactured health scare story created by the BBC to publicise one of its own television documentaries" (*Warnings from the Wild*: see *Eye* 1019). SQS said salmon farming "...employs 6,500 people, of whom 4,700 live and work in the remote, rural communities of the Scottish Highlands and Islands". It also said: "The industry injects at least £1m every week into fragile rural economies in pay-packets."

Nine days later, however, after *Warnings from the Wild* was screened, SQS issued a further statement. This claimed fish farming delivered "...more than £2m-plus per week in pay packets". Where did this extra £1m-plus suddenly come from?

And where are these "remote and fragile" areas? Geographically Orkney and Shetland might come into this category, but in terms of employment they do not. Unemployment is lower there than almost anywhere else in Scotland.

Are the city of Inverness and East Ross-shire fragile and remote? Fish processors there find it so hard to attract staff they have to employ workers from Portugal. Is Fort William a fragile rural area? Police recently raided a Fort William fish processing plant and carted off a busload of illegal immigrants working there.

Are the Scottish Borders fragile and remote? (*Are the Scottish Borders "Highlands"? Ed.*) Two Border firms engaged in processing fake salmon, Farne Salmon Ltd and Pinneys Ltd, employ 1,500 workers. Police removed another batch of illegal immigrants working for Farne Salmon.

Meanwhile chemical company Schering-Plough Ltd, anxious to introduce a new generation of toxic chemicals to "control" fish farm sea lice, claims fake fish farming "supports 7,000 jobs".

Fergus Ewing, MSP and SNP shadow rural affairs minister, responded instantly to the magic word "jobs" and rushed to Schering-Plough's aid. He says the company should be allowed to sell its toxic chemical because 7,000 jobs depend upon fake fish farming "most of whom are working in parts of the Highlands and Islands where there are no other available jobs". Really?

'Backbiter'

MMR Vaccine Debate: Another Dose

IT IS to be hoped that the department of health's emergency summit conference to try to restore public confidence in the MMR (measles, mumps rubella) vaccine this week takes on board the lessons of the BSE inquiry and the government drops its claims to have all the answers. It clearly does not.

It is also to be hoped that in its continuing efforts to overcome doubts about the safety of the triple vaccine it stops making claims – as it did last weekend – that do not stand up to proper scrutiny.

For example, parents were no doubt relieved by the department's announcement that a huge study of 1.8m children and adults over a 14-year period in Finland had found no links between the MMR vaccine and autism. It sounded pretty conclusive... except the claims being made about the study's findings were complete nonsense.

Indeed, they add nothing to the current debate on MMR: whether it could be a factor in the massive increase in cases of autism recorded in the last decade – Wakefield, in West Yorkshire, for example, records a 22-fold increase from five to 111 children with autism in just seven years.

Firstly, the Finnish researchers did not in fact study all 1.8m children. They relied on "passive reporting" by doctors of specific adverse reactions to the vaccination: a bit like our own unreliable yellow card system which relies on doctors to make the link. At best, experts largely agree, this picks up only 10 percent of incidents.

Then, the adverse reactions that were being looked for – sudden death, fits, allergic reactions, neurological disorders and the possibility of chronic disease such as rheumatoid arthritis and diabetes – did not actually include autism or any symptoms associated with it. Because the search for adverse reactions largely concentrated on a three-week period after vaccination, the slow deterioration and detection of autism would anyway have been missed by the study.

In fact long-term follow-up only involved the 173 potentially serious reactions identified by doctors and researchers, the most serious of which was encephalitis. Even then researchers did not look to see if all of these children went on to develop autism. As evidenced by another paper by the researchers, they looked for autism in only 31 cases. Those were children who had suffered severe gastro-enteritis within days of the vaccination. But since no one has ever suggested that immediate acute gastro-enteritis symptoms were an indication of anything to do with autism, it is perhaps not surprising that none of the 31 developed autism.

So though the Finnish paper reports that it found no link, as the authors now admit they were not specifically looking for one.

As a strike against the second study by Andrew Wakefield, of London's Royal Free hospital, which cast doubts on the vaccine, it singularly fails.

Wakefield

In a review of all the research into the vaccine, Wakefield, supported by experts in medicine safety, questions the swift decision to license the product in 1988 because it was never subjected to adequate testing; because the follow-up data was collected over too short a period; and evidence suggesting that the vaccines can interact with each other and the child's immune system was not properly investigated.

We also now know, thanks to the BSE inquiry, that at the time the authorities responsible for medicine licensing were over-stretched, understaffed and in chaos.

It was of course Dr Wakefield who first questioned whether there was a link between MMR and a particular form of regressive autism which he found associated with rare inflammation of the bowel. His highly controversial study was published in the *Lancet* in 1998. Although he stressed he was not anti-vaccine and was careful not to conclude that there was a link – only that the area needed exploration – both he and his work were rubbished by the government and the scientific establishment.

But two more pieces of research that the government always quotes to allay people's fears and to prove that Wakefield is barking up the wrong tree, are – just like the Finnish study – inconclusive.

The main one is a study by London professor Brent Taylor, which detected a sharp rise in the number of children with autism in north London but suggested the upwards trend began before 1988, when MMR became a routine vaccine. That study has since been criticised for not making clear that it included older children in a "catch-up" campaign, which might explain the earlier start of the increase in autism.

The second is one that the Committee on the Safety of Medicines carried out itself, involving families who believed their children had been damaged by the vaccine. The committee did not look at any medical records but relied on questionnaires from GPs, less than half of whom had bothered to reply. The committee concluded it was impossible to prove or refute suggested associations between MMR vaccine and autism or inflammatory bowel disease, because of the nature of the information. Nevertheless the department of health claimed the study showed there was no evidence to support causal association.

Since then, however, events have moved a little in favour of Dr Wakefield's theories. Professor John O'Leary, a leading pathologist, has found the measles virus in 24 out of 25 of Dr Wakefield's autistic or bowel-diseased patients – and in only one of his control group. A research group in Japan has also found the measles virus in the blood of three of Dr Wakefield's patients, which they say is consistent with the genetic fingerprint of the strain used in the MMR vaccine.

This still does not prove the link but it underlines Wakefield's demands for more research and for caution. We are also facing – what the government seems to be slow in recognising – a steep and so far unexplained rise in autism in the last few years; not only in the UK but in countries like the US and Finland. No comprehensive figures for the UK are available. But in some areas, like Cambridge, researchers have found one autistic child per 173. An even higher figure emerges from a local education authority report in East Surrey. Among boys, the figure rises to one in 69. Yet the *Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry* in 1988 suggested the incidence in 1985 was only one per 2,500.

Diagnosis

Some experts believe the increase may simply reflect better diagnosis. Others suggest the increase is too dramatic and too sudden and that there may be some external trigger. Research is already underway to see, for example, if there is a link between viral infections in pregnant women and autism in their children.

But the increase also happens to coincide with the introduction of mass MMR vaccination. That again does nothing to prove any link. But some experts clearly believe MMR may well be a factor. The parents of more than 2,000 children are also convinced their sudden decline so soon after vaccination is not a coincidence. People like David Thrower, who says: "I watched my son descend from a perfectly normal 14-month old to a mentally handicapped 16-month old. At 14 months he could post square bricks through square slots. Today at 13 years, he still cannot. Did I miss some other major but mysterious adverse event in his development? And why was such an adverse event at exactly the time of his vaccination?"

Many parents are now consulting their lawyers with a view to suing the manufacturers of the vaccine as a desperate attempt to get at the truth. But shouldn't a government, burned by the BSE debacle, proceed with caution instead of berating conscientious parents and preventing them from giving their children separate doses of vaccine – if they believe it to be safer? After all, just in case Wakefield and co are on to something, the costs involved in administering separate doses are only a fraction of the costs of care for the alarming number of our children who now have autism and related conditions.

FIVE TV

Baddiel's Syndrome (Sky One)
Baddiel And Skinner Unplanned (ITV)
Temptation Island (Sky One)
The West Wing (Channel 4)

LONG mocked for being merely a doss-house for American buy-ins, Sky One has recently striven to suggest that it can make original television. The channel's most expensive home-made product ever is Baddiel's Syndrome, a sitcom co-written by and starring the other half of Newman & Baddiel and Baddiel & Skinner.

The original commissions for Sky One are beginning to suggest a Murdoch's Syndrome at work. Performers bring to the network, for huge sums of money, projects which they simply couldn't get made anywhere else. Harry Enfield used the cover of a largely unseen channel to experiment with sexual and scatalogical material impossible on the BBC.

In the same way, it's hard to imagine any network except Sky One having allowed *Baddiel's Syndrome* to happen. Baddiel has recently enjoyed some success as a novelist, a new career path which, friends and enemies alike believed, quietly acknowledged his shortcomings as a performer.

Therefore, you rather hope that, even given the state of the BBC and ITV at the moment, if he had turned up in an exec's office and announced "20-part sitcom in which I play a bloke with my own name, though he's an architect to add a bit of distance", someone would have said: "David, are you absolutely sure that you really are the British Jerry Seinfeld?"

Sky One, though, is the telly equivalent of those faded convenience stores in desert border towns, where the shop-keeper looks amazed when a customer comes through the door. Murdoch's box arm gleefully accepted *Baddiel's Syndrome*, even tolerating the short scenes and fading out accompanied by a musical sting, to make it look even more like Seinfeld.

And, at BBC or ITV, you still hope, they would have laughed when Dave said: "Oh, look, I've got this mate who's film critic of The Guardian and did a bit of student acting but would really like to be in it." But, on Sky One, you have Peter Bradshaw looking as uncomfortable as most newspaper reviewers would alongside

"Everyone's got a cookery show these days "

professional actors in a sitcom. Greg Dyke and David Liddiment may have their faults, but we are probably safe from ever tuning in to find a BBC sitcom starring Dawn French and Phillip French or an ITV one in which Alexander Walker does a turn as Frank Skinner's flat-mate.

Jerry Seinfeld and Garry Shandling and other Yank stand-ups may play quite close to their own personality when switching to sitcom, but *Baddiel's Syndrome* offers the bizarre sight of two people who are not acting at all. Bradshaw is his movie-screening self with a slightly posher voice. Baddiel is indistinguishable from the figure appearing as himself on a sofa in **Baddiel & Skinner Unplanned** (ITV), the ad-lib fiasco which is scheduled to allow an entire Baddiel hour across satellite and terrestrial on Sunday nights.

In *Baddiel's Syndrome*, the film critic and the comedian appearing as themselves are delivering a script which is also too familiar. The Bradshaw "character" is an aristocrat, purely so that someone can describe him as a "count, a real count" and be misheard.

Any non-Baddiel fans not switching over to catch him on ITV got on Sky One **Temptation Island**, the American monstrosity in which the separate halves of established couples are confined on a tropical island with nubile and semi-clad tempters to see if they crack. It's cheap rubbish and the only interest is why Sky One has started bothering to make its own expensive rubbish when it can buy this kind of stuff by the yard from LA.

The West Wing (Channel 4), rightly praised by critics for its picture of American politics, is, though most viewers may not yet spot this, an urgent lesson in the new politics of British television. This White House drama was premiered on Sky One, a pattern previously followed with recent series of other American hits including **Friends** and **ER**.

But, while the first series of *The West Wing* is available to all Channel 4 viewers, the second run will be confined to the channel's new digital spin-off, E4. The same will also happen with future series of *Friends*. This is a crucial decision for viewers here. Sky One's policy of trying to bribe people to buy satellite by screening US treats like *Friends*, *ER* and *The West Wing* never worked, because the canny viewer knew they would soon turn up on terrestrial. Now that a terrestrial channel is, for the first time, playing the blackmail game, the future is becoming clear. There will be too classes of viewers: old tech and new tech.

'Square Eyes'

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore

Roseanne Arnold Schwarzenegger

DUMB BRITAIN

MIDDAY MONEY
Richard Madeley: What was the plot hatched by Guy Fawkes known as?
Contestant: Bonfire Night.

THE WEAKEST LINK
Anne Robinson: The name of which Italian, born in 1469, is synonymous with immoral cunning?
Contestant: Mussolini.
AR: Which animal's male and female are called Jack and Jenny?
Contestant: The worm.
AR: Who wrote *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*?
Contestant: Dr Seuss.

FIFTEEN TO ONE
William G Stewart: In the novel and film, what is *Howard's End*?
Contestant: A boatyard.
WGS: Which measure, equal to one eighth of a mile, is mainly used in horse racing?
Contestant: A fathom.

PLAYING FOR TIME (BBC 1)
Question: What letter is used twice in the word fillet?
Contestant: Fish.

MEDIA NEWS

"THIS report contains pictures of the bodies," ITN's Dermot Murnaghan warned viewers as he braced them for his late news bulletin on the "bodies in the Bedford hospital chapel" story.

What followed was a still of the photograph that had already appeared without warning on several newspaper front pages, not to mention all the other news broadcasts, including ITN.

Why such tact when the rest of the programme contained pictures of bodies crushed by the El Salvador earthquake and horrible footage of Palestinian women trapped in a building being torched by Israeli settlers?

The answer, of course, is that the Bedford bodies are not foreign.

CAPITA, the company that took over the BBC's correspondence unit with a resulting collapse in morale and delays in responding to letters due to staff "shrinkage", has added BBC Audience Lines to its exciting portfolio.

True to form staff morale at the Glasgow and Belfast call centres has collapsed and prospective callers to the BBC's Lifeline appeal have been unable to get through to pledge money due to a lack of operators (that cost-saving "shrinkage" problem again).

Until now the BBC's public service role meant its Audience Lines service, funded by the licence fee, had a "social action role" to support people so affected by programmes they needed advice. Now the service has been "outsourced" licence money has to cope with Capita's profit margins as well.

HOW many BBC suits does it take to change a light bulb? More and more, it seems.

Five new general managers or "buildings champions" have been appointed to run BBC buildings. There will be "dedicated teams", a helpdesk for all "building-related queries" and control of "building-related services will be passed from Property and Facilities Management areas within Resources" to a new "Revenue, Procurement and Services Division" within Resources.

A LATE Christmas present for the Dirty Digger has arrived from the Radio Authority, which is helpfully slashing the licence fee paid for talkSport, the Murdoch radio outfit run by Russell Crowe-lookalike Kelvin MacKenzie.

Talk won its licence as a news and speech station but has since been allowed by the authority to lurch from one format to another, culminating in Kelvin's decision to get rid of most of the existing staff (and listeners) by concentrating on sport. Perhaps its finest achievement has been to use crowd sound effects so that commentators can pretend to be at football matches while actually watching them on TV.

MacKenzie and the Murdoch press have often condemned the government for refusing to let Wimbledon and other "national events" be auctioned off to the highest bidder. But apparently this doesn't apply to radio franchises. The new terms will reduce Talk's annual licence fee from the existing £4.3m to just £500,000 – a coup which will save the company's shareholders (including Kelvin and Rupert) about £30m over the next eight years. In return for this largesse, the percentage of its "qualifying revenue" (ie after expenses and losses are deducted) which talkSport will have to pay is increased from 4 percent to 6 percent.

The slight flaw in this is that talkSport doesn't make any profits, and there's little prospect of any change given that Rupert seems determined to use the station solely to force up the amount of money the BBC has to pay for live sports coverage.

MEANWHILE Mike Parry, newly appointed head of production at talkSport, is installing extra CCTV cameras throughout the office, including the studios. "This is because of recurring damage to fittings and fixtures," he explains in a stern memo, "which nobody ever witnesses and thus we are unable to find out who is responsible…

"The water machine will be removed because it has been damaged three times in the last two weeks. Twice the carpet has been flooded. We can't tolerate destruction like this any longer and where the company obtains clear evidence of an individual indulging in acts of vandalism, that individual will be instantly dismissed and the matter will be pursued in law."

This is not the first case of spy-cameras being used to catch malefactors at talkSport. Only last month there was the great coffee-cup scandal in which several cups were left in the sink overnight, unwashed. CCTV footage of the kitchen is now being studied to discover the miscreant. As for the latest acts of vandalism, it seems at least one carpet-flooding incident was due to a presenter vomiting copiously while on-air and failing to reach the adjacent "rest room".

Parry is certainly well qualified to take a hard line with loutish behaviour. In 1989, as news editor of the *Daily Express*, he had to be pulled apart from the *Daily Star*'s deputy news editor, Paul Smith, when a "Farewell to the Black Lubyanka" party ended in fisticuffs. The following year he managed to get himself arrested by the Italian police while attending the 1990 World Cup, following a tired and emotional fracas with Brian McNally, a sports hack from the *Newcastle Journal*. After being denounced by Parry as "scumbags", the *carabinieri* also confiscated his passport, which was returned only after a high-level intervention by the foreign office.

On a freebie trip to Moscow a couple of years later, Parry almost came to blows with Richard Littlejohn and several other hacks when they accused him of filing a bogus "exclusive" claiming that Muscovites were using hamburgers as hard currency. And in May 1996, at the football writers' annual dinner in London, he drunkenly invited *Sunday Times* sportswriter Joe Lovejoy to "step outside". Lovejoy duly did so – and within seconds Parry was on his back nursing a bloody lip.

How fortunate for Parry that his previous employers – who include the *Sun*, the Football Association and the Press Association – didn't take such a tough line with thugs as does the high-minded talkSport.

"Text and phones may break my bones"

THE BBC's 'controversial' drama *Rebel Heart* performed badly in the ratings in Britain, but it did even worse in Ireland.

RTE, which started showing the drama two episodes ahead of the BBC, expected huge audiences. Instead it got the worst ever performance for an Irish drama, with all the episodes shown so far failing to make it into Ireland's Top 20.

There are two possible explanations. First, that virtually everyone in the republic is sick of this stuff. The other is that, at dead of night, a Royal Navy submarine entered Dublin Bay. Members of the Special Boat Squadron then emerged to paddle up the River Dodder until they reached Donnybrook, home of RTE.

They then abseiled into the office where the ratings are kept, surreptitiously altered them to humiliate Bennett and his media allies, and left without being spotted.

WHILE the Christmas ratings war will affect BBC and ITV planners in different ways, the outcome for viewers will be predictable and singular: more cheap 'n' cheerful down-market rubbish at peak times, while producers squabble for whatever money is left over once the few, usually independent production houses that provide sure-fire ratings hits have taken their share.

Meanwhile on ITV, a review of its own ratings failures is expected. The current weakest link is *Blind Date*, now even outside the top 45 ratings list. Watch out for a tearful "goodbye" to Our Cilla later this year, ending perhaps with a touching *Audience with Cilla*, depending on how angry she is at being dumped – her wrath likely to be tempered by a vast cheque.

Even now, though, there is probably someone at

BBC TV Centre already doing the sums to see if Cilla could be hired for the summer season, which will include such expensive luminaries as Ian Wright. No doubt Cilla will "Return To Her Natural Home" and on a lot less dosh than Wrighty.

What really worries ITV bosses, though, is a collapse in the ratings they don't like to talk about: people watching adverts. In spite of the vast bonuses paid to ITV executives last year, these really have gone down the pan: down 3 percent on the year, they're a full 20 percent less than they were five years ago. Even more worrying, advertisers have discovered that viewers with an IQ higher than their shoe size are fleeing ITV in record numbers.

The real winners of the ratings war are the cable and satellite channels. They'll take on programmes like *Blind Date*, or any of the popular "reality television" formats, inject them with added filth and watch their ratings soar. They're up to record levels, thanks to shows like Sky One's bonk-fest *Temptation Island* [see Square Eyes]. And who did Sky have to fight off to clinch the deal? The highbrow BBC, that's who.

GOING LIVE

BBC *News at One*'s live report from Jodrell Bank about the forthcoming lunar eclipse was enlightening. "The telescope is very old now," we were told, but "still works perfectly".

However "it's useless to view the eclipse with because it's a radio telescope and doesn't pick up visible light". Brilliant!

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

WHATEVER else devolution has brought to the people of Scotland, it certainly hasn't enhanced their cultural life. Glasgow used to be a major port of call for opera-lovers, with a full-time company, Scottish Opera, whose production standards were among the best in Europe. But all that is on hold.

The company went dark on 31 December and will not be staging anything until it creeps back into half-life (or as its marketing material insists, "springs into action") with a revival of a veteran *Don Giovanni* staging at the end of March. It had to scrap its schedule for lack of funds.

While Scottish opera-lovers wait with bated breath for an announcement of what future, if any, there might be for their national company, a pitiful bout of finger-pointing has broken out between the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Arts Council.

The Arts Council insists that this is all down to the Scottish culture minister Sam Galbraith, in that he decides funding levels. But Galbraith's office says the whole matter is in the hands of the Arts Council, which should be "advising" Galbraith what to do.

A decision of some kind has been promised in February. Meanwhile Scottish Opera's smiles look ever more desperate as it postpones until the autumn (at the earliest) the possibility of any kind of new production.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

DOING THE ROUNDS

Web special

THE professional backlash has started against the hospital death rate "consumer" guide prepared by private publishing company Doctor Foster and published in the *Sunday Times* (14 Jan, available at www.sunday-times.co.uk/hospital guide/). A source "close to the *Health Service Journal*" said: "People in the NHS have been working their arses off to collect this data, just to give this outfit a fat profit."

Certainly the survey had department of health backing, with regional offices strongly advising trusts to take part in the survey and thick-but-ambitious health secretary Alan Milburn popping up in editorials promising to end the "unacceptable variations" between hospitals. This, of course, is precisely what previous incumbent, thick-but-unambitious Frank Dobson promised in the three-year-old white paper *A First Class Service: Quality in the New NHS.*

"All patients should receive a first class service. The unacceptable variations that have grown up in recent years must end." Blah blah blah. But how true are the variations?

One major flaw appears to be a lack of statistical peer review of the data, despite the presence of a prestigious ethics committee that included Sir George Alberti, president of the Royal College of Physicians, and Sir Donald Irvine, president of the general medical council (GMC). One absentee was former trust chief executive and health pundit Roy Lilley. Lilley is not averse to calling doctors to account (he famously suggested installing close-circuit TV in operating theatres) but turned it down having been told that membership "was not an onerous task" with contact largely by email "to create as small a workload as possible".

Lilley was also unimpressed by the questionnaire sent to the trusts and said that the conclusion that the "doctor-bed" ratio was a key factor in predicting mortality was "nonsense". The survey claims to be a fairer comparison of hospitals than the government's own "performance indicators" (www.doh.gov.uk/nhsperformanceindicators/index.htm) but regardless of their accuracy, both have taken a huge amount of time and effort to compile while providing virtually nothing for individual patients other than morbid fascination. Death rates lumped into one without specifying a disease or a surgical team may be a first step in getting the NHS to scrutinise its work, but it won't tell you anything about the doctors treating you.

This sort of information is decidedly thin on the ground in the NHS. This isn't to say that useful audit isn't done, it's just that it's always made anonymous so you can't tell one unit from another. The Royal College of Surgeons audit into prostate surgery found that your chances of dying during surgery vary six fold from surgeon to surgeon but only a summary of the findings is available on the website (www.rcseng.ac.uk/), and even the print version doesn't tell you whom to avoid.

Contrast this to the freedom of information in America, where you can download the risk-adjusted death rates of individual surgeons and hospitals (go to gopher.health.state.ny.us/ and enter the "consumer heart" site), get basic information about any doctors training and qualifications (www.ama-assn.org/aps/amahg.htm) and even find out how much "keeping up" they've done recently and whether any disciplinary action has been taken against them (eg www.docboard.org/ma/df/masearch.htm).

In the UK there is at least an excellent site for those who aspire to numeracy in comparing doctors' performance at www.sghms.ac.uk/phs/staff/jdp/appendix.htm. And the GMC – the body responsible for licensing UK doctors – does at least have a website (www.gmc-uk.org) where you can download the "Full text of GMC President Sir Donald Irvine's Lloyd Roberts lecture to the Royal Society of Medicine, 16 January 2001." But there's nothing there of any use.

● LETTER sent to the *Eye* last week:

Dear Private Eye,

The Bedford "scandal" is all too common an occurrence and, to be honest, didn't warrant a passing comment in our department's coffee room, apart from the joke that "usually this doesn't happen until February when the junior doctors start".

I work in a very busy London hospital A&E department. I hope you realise that this attitude does not make us heartless, it simply shows what a load of pig-shit the NHS is at the moment, and I say that from a position where I love my work and would never consider doing anything else. Which other professions can say they get so regularly and thoroughly "fucked" by their bosses?

M.D.

DOWN ON THE FARM

THE many farmers on waterlogged soil who have been unable to sow all their autumn crops, or who have lost areas through flooding, now hope to drill spring varieties instead.

Because of the scale of the disaster there is not nearly enough seed in the UK, so some will be imported from Europe. But as those varieties are not ideal for our climate, and are also in short supply, some farmers would like to use "farm saved seed" instead, a common practice making up 40 percent of all seed sown.

This is fine for those who grew the same spring crop last year, produced a quality fit for seed and still have some in the barn. For the majority the obvious solution is to locate some suitable grain on another farm and buy it.

That, however, would be illegal. Throughout the history of agriculture, saved seed has been the only seed, and was routinely traded between farms and areas as the need arose, as in most of the world today, Europe included. But in the UK an act of 1964 outlawed trade in all saved seed to protect the intellectual property rights of the plant breeding companies.

Because no royalty was payable on saved seed it was argued that trade in grain for seed infringed those rights – farmers who had never bought breeders' certified seed could benefit from improved breeding at no cost. Not everyone accepts this and there is a powerful counter argument that breeders should collect all their royalties at the certified (seed merchant) level – the last stage at which the breeders can actually certify anything about the seed.

But the situation has now changed because in 1997, after a long battle, plant breeders won the right to claim royalties on farm-saved seed. Since this means their property rights are now recognised and lavishly rewarded, there is no longer any case for banning the sale of saved seed. The scrapping of that legislation – a rare thing amid the torrent of new regulation – would provide a genuine easing of some farmers' problems, though sadly not in time for this most difficult of planting seasons.

'Gunboat'

SIGNAL FAILURES

An apology to rail enquiries staff

THE *Eye* has been taken to task for describing the call centres of the national rail enquiries service (NRES) as workhouses where poorly paid staff are sometimes reduced to tears. According to a former employee at the centre in Dundee, that description "understates the sweatshop nature of employment".

He says he was paid less than office cleaners or shelf fillers at his local branch of Lidl, and that each person's performance was monitored with print-outs showing average time per call, time spent going to toilet, etc. Staff should end each call within 90 seconds and were pressurised to reduce that as the company running each centre is paid per call answered.

In addition they were meant to provide no more information than requested. "Where callers want the next train between X and Y that is what they get, even if it's a slow train and a later departure arrives earlier or qualifies for a cheaper fare," writes our correspondent. "Members of the public frequently experience 'problems with the line' which lead to them being cut off. This is because agents often disconnect calls which appear likely to last any length of time in order to meet targets."

As well as struggling to understand and explain the restrictions on each train ticket, staff had to deal with special offers not on the normal computer programme. It took a third of the precious 90 seconds to access the database and the offer conditions needed so long to explain they were often not mentioned to callers.

NRES hired just 200 extra staff to cover the rail crisis. Thousands of callers couldn't get through but our correspondent says that won't worry the companies contracted to run the call centres. "Chaos on the rails means lots more anxious would-be travellers, which means more calls to NRES and lots more income." The rail regulator, which monitors NRES, will probably excuse its failure to answer so many calls because of the exceptional circumstances.

Callers who did get through might be none the wiser: the chances are their call was handled by someone dozens or hundreds of miles away with no local knowledge. If rail companies have learned anything from the situation, they will end the nonsense of local stations being ex-directory (in the interests of minimal staffing). Staff are the ones who know most about the tickets available from their station, which trains are delayed and which routes are suspended because of rain, leaves, Virgin, floods, Railtrack or other malignant influences.

NRES is monitored mainly by quantity, eg percentage of calls answered, rather than quality. The information given, as survey after survey has shown, is often inaccurate and incomplete (and travelling with the wrong ticket can cost passengers dear). But acknowledging that would force operators to abandon their faith in information technology and reemploy station staff.

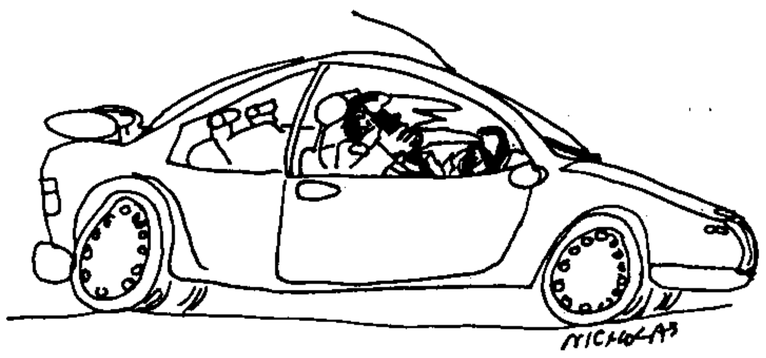
Some callers who couldn't get through to NRES were advised to use the internet. But Railtrack's timetable site was also inaccurate as Railtrack couldn't be bothered to update its database. Railtrack washed its hands of blame for its shoddiness by advising people to check all details given on the net by, er, phoning NRES.

Many train operators are keen to highlight their investment in information systems (usually monitor screens at stations) but the industry's attitude to informing customers shows in its determination to confuse passengers over train fares while removing the station staff who could explain those fares and pretending NRES answers inquiries accurately.

● NEARLY a year after *Eye* 996 exposed the pitiful workings of the internal Southall crash inquiry (which ignored and silenced witnesses who had vital but commercially awkward evidence), the rail industry has realised it needs to find out how an accident happened months or years before a public inquiry reaches a conclusion.

Lawyers for each rail company involved insist on having one of their company's managers on any internal inquiry panel, which means more than 60 companies each need managers competent to sit on a panel should an accident occur. British Rail's inquiries were handled by managers who had spent at least 10 years running railways and understanding the roles of different staff. Railway Safety (a division of Railtrack) recognises such experience is scarce following an exodus of senior BR managers and an influx from outside the industry, so consultants have developed a range of "learning programmes" to prepare the new boil-in-the-bag managers for inquiries. How many years does the new "core learning programme" take to equip a newcomer with the skills needed to participate in, or even lead, an inquiry? Er, three days.

'Dr B. Ching'



"I've gone off the rails"

RAIL travellers are hanging on train announcers' every word at Havant Station, after the computer system that displays train information was stolen.

The theft, which took place the week before Christmas, has baffled South West Train bosses, who say the machine is of no value or use to anyone.

South West Trains Spokeswoman Jane Lee said: 'It is solely a Customer Information System – of no use to man nor beast.'

Portsmouth News

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

IN THE SHITNET

THE neighbouring London boroughs of Hackney and Islington have finally decided what to do about their useless housing benefit (HB) contractor SHITNet, aka ITNet (*Eyes passim*).

ITNet's inefficiency has caused huge suffering and anxiety for the very poorest people it is supposed to help, while allowing fraudsters to carry on virtually unchecked. Hackney reiterated its decision, reached last autumn, to sack the company; but Islington has extended its £23m, seven-year contract.

Is Islington mad? Lib Dem council leader Steve Hitchins portrays the decision as the tough renegotiation of an unrealistic original contract made with the former Labour regime. If the service doesn't improve radically, he says, ITNet simply won't be paid. Getting tough was the best, most cost-effective course.

Another way of putting it is that ITNet has the council over a barrel. Sacking ITNet would cost Islington £13m and bringing HB back in house would cost millions more. What about finding another contractor? Companies like Crapita in Lambeth and CSL in Croydon are every bit as bad as SHitnet. And in any case, after the financial and PR disasters of the past few years, such companies are no longer exactly queuing up to administer HB on councils' behalf — which could yet prove a problem for Hackney.

One solution might have been to let Islington's other neighbour Camden take over the running of the service. Camden, which resisted the 1990s fashion for "outsourcing" HB, runs the most efficient service of the inner London boroughs, and the cheapest, at £127 per claim. A deal was almost struck, but then Camden admitted it could be two years before a decent service was guaranteed, and that things would probably get worse before they got better. Islington chickened out and SHitnet stays.

And what about future HB strategy in Hackney, Britain's worst council? It can be summarised in four words: haven't got a clue.

PERKS OF THE JOB?

MARTIN WARSAMA, a social worker and elected Unison rep, was suspended by Doncaster council on 20 December accused of "leaking sensitive material" to a local newspaper.

The story had indeed been a shocker: Doncaster social services had returned a 13-year-old boy to his sex abuser father after the boy had rowed with his mother. Social services managers stuck the lad on a train to Newcastle with no money and no adult supervision. Warsama's only involvement in the case was to object to this course of action and to be overruled. No action was taken against the managers responsible for the handover, Mike Kemp and Roni Dobbin.

The story was given to the press not by Warsama but by two councillors: Lib Dem Karen Page and Margaret Pinkney, an independent. Warsama has nevertheless been forbidden by social services director Mervyn Thomas from entering council property, including the Unison office — over which Thomas has no authority. Despite strong grassroots support for Warsama, the regional Unison office is refusing to fund his legal costs in a case that could cost the council thousands.

Warsama's real crime was to upset the cosy relationship between politicians, management and union bosses in Doncaster. Deposing time-serving branch officers, asking awkward questions about the handling of union funds and winning cases against the bosses, he is not welcome in senior Labour and Unison boozing circles. Oh, and he's black. His Unison superior Frank Perks, however, is a drinking partner of council leader Colin Wedd, and was invited to Thomas's stag night.

ROTTEN ROLL

LIB DEMS in Devon are crying foul over a blatant piece of Tory "ballot-rigging" in the run-up to an important council by-election.

The poll for the Honiton St Paul's ward on East Devon district council, occasioned by the death of Conservative council leader Ron Gigg last October, has been set by the Tories for 7 February — just two weeks before a new electoral roll is due to come into force. There has been a lot of new building in the ward since the last roll was compiled — mostly cheaper homes whose inhabitants might be expected to vote Lib Dem rather than Tory. But until the new roll is in force, some 690 electors in a ward of 3,800 will not be entitled to vote.

Why should the Tories resort to such shady tactics, given that they will retain control of the council whatever the by-election result? The answer may lie in the fact that the local MP is shadow leader of the Commons Angela Browning, whose parliamentary majority of 1,653 is considered the sixth most vulnerable in the country by the Lib Dems. Embarrassment in a council by-election in the run-up to 3 May is the last thing Devon Tories need.

We think rain caused the floods, says Thames Water

Newbury & Thatcham Chronicle

FRIENDS OF FRANK

LABOUR party officials are keeping to their scrupulously neutral stance in the case of Frank McKenna, deputy leader of Lancashire county council, and fellow councillor John Fillis, who with West Lancs MP Colin Pickthall and his secretary Pauline Roughley, have been reported to the crown prosecution service in connection with allegations of "financial irregularities" in the West Lancashire constituency Labour party — first revealed in *Eye* 987.

Within a fortnight of our original story Labour's north-west region claimed to have "investigated" the affair and found nothing amiss. A year-long police investigation, however, resulted in the papers being forwarded to the CPS. Last week Labour party selection meetings were held to choose candidates for Lancashire in the county council elections. Days before they took place, members received a letter from north-west regional director Kevin Lee to the effect that everyone should pretend nothing had happened. He wrote: "None of the four are currently under arrest or on bail" — not true in the case of Fillis and McKenna, who are on bail.

"This is clearly a matter for the CPS... these are not issues that should influence any selection meetings." To make sure of this, Lee ruled that "questions relating to the allegations will not be acceptable". He evidently did not feel that his strictures applied to himself. "From the information I have received I am confident that no sustainable charges will be brought against any of the four named individuals," he said. What such "information" might be he does not say.

PS: He need not have worried. The friends of Frank McKenna packed the selection meetings, with the effect that McKenna was shortlisted for three seats in all, although in his own seat of Upholland it was a shortlist of one.

High Principals

WHEN a college faces an inspection by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), who better to turn to for help than the FEFC's former chief executive Terry Melia?

Once in charge of the inspectors and still hired by them as a consultant, though Melia has stepped down from the top job he is still a force in further education. He chairs the Learning and Skills Development Agency, an independent organisation which specialises in training and consultancy in the FE sector, and also carries out private consultancy work for both the FEFC and individual colleges.

It was in this private capacity that Doncaster College paid him around £400 a day for advice on how to carry out the self-assessment required before its FEFC inspection. In July 1999 Melia provided the college with a step by step guide to writing a self-assessment report, together with a set of written recommendations on how to achieve a successful grade. With Melia's help Doncaster's self-assessment was rubber-stamped by the FEFC and the college achieved predictably good results.

When the new Learning and Skills Council takes over the functions of the FEFC in April, will it agree that letting Melia show colleges under inspection how to put the best gloss on their failings is the best way to maintain high standards in the sector?

THE director of the snappily-named Surrey Institute of Art and Design University College, Elaine Thomas, has been devoting much of her own and management time to penning a mission statement for the college.

On 11 January staff received a four-page email updating them on a discussion dating back to October regarding the proposed statement: "To be the specialist University College with an international reputation in education and research for the cultural industries."

Thomas tells staff that several departments have expressed concern over the use of "the" in front of the phrase "university college" fearing that "this implied arrogance and caused confusion". Nevertheless the college's "executive group" has decided to give the "the" a reprieve, although the term "cultural" has been given the chop in favour of "creative" because it is seen as either too broad or too narrow a definition.

Keen followers of the debate will be glad to hear that next month the executive group will spend even more time on this worthy subject during an away day whose sole purpose is to consider the mission statement even further.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER

TO ME THE STREETS OF ISLINGTON ARE MY CATWALK AND I JUST LOVE MAKING A FASHION STATEMENT
IT'S GREAT TO FEEL YOU'RE STANDING OUT FROM THE HERD AND ENGENDERING A RESPONSE
HEE HEE HEE
HA HA
HA HA HA
HA

Letters

Mr Blubby

Sir,

*Your contributor's imagination is running away with itself. The wonderfully articulate but lovingly indiscreet George Carman did **not** refuse to let the Carmen Proetta libel action against the Sunday Times go to court. He made it absolutely clear that he could prove that her account of the three IRA terrorists being shot by the SAS in Gibraltar was demonstrably wrong. But while George could prove that standing on his head, it was a messy action over the escort agency bit which is where the wicked Joey Wilkins, Eve International and some dough to his sister came in!*

Anyway, the day before the trial was due to start, George, after winning a point in the Court of Appeal, trotted off home with acute gastroenteritis. Later that day he settled the action from his sick bed.

*The settlement did **not** cause me to burst into tears earning me the epithet of "Blubber Brett". I earned that on another occasion when I honourably refrained from punching her silk when he accused me of unmentionable things in court. Instead I slammed my papers on the table, told the court it was all "outrageous", sat down and shed a tear or two!*

So there was no smear campaign against Proetta, as Channel 4 know to their cost. They had to pay out substantial damages to Blubber and the affable "Slippery" of the Costas, when they accused us of a similar dastardly lie. It is about time the Eye paid for its past misdemeanours, invited me to one of those lunches and had to listen to actually what did happen in Gibraltar. My boring the pants off your contributors is a small price to pay!

Yours,
BLUBBER BRETT,

London SW6.

Waugh story

Sir,

In his/her brief comments on the Channel 4 version of Waugh's "Sword of Honour" (Eye 1018), the distressingly youthful Square Eyes, like everyone else, seems unwilling or unable to make any comparisons with the excellent TV adaptation of this trilogy screened many years ago and starring Edward Woodward as Guy Crouchback. (Having an abysmal memory for such details, I can't say which channel it was on, nor in which year — I would guess the second half of the 1960s.) That earlier version was broadcast over many weeks, and thus had a much better chance of conveying the content of three whole novels than does this year's dramatisation in a mere two episodes.

Yours fraternally,
RICHARD ANDREWS,

Leeds.

A social service

Sir,

Thought you would like to be the first to read the official report into the death of little Anna Climbie.

The cause was: Low morale, Lack of funds, Overworked, More training, Papers lost between departments, Lack of communication, "Fell through safety net", Tightening of procedures, New guidelines, Review of future, similar cases, Chance in a million, Misunderstandings between departments, Staff involved promoted (sorry) disciplined.

Hope the early copy of the report was of use to you.

Regards,
ROBERT J. SMITH,

Notts.

Unfair game

Sir,

A spot check of page 16 of the Daily Telegraph of 18 Jan indicates some 30 MPs from Scottish constituencies voted on the fox hunting issue applicable only England & Wales. I believe, like Tam Dalyell, abstention would have been the sensible answer. The English (& Welsh) will continue to be barred from reciprocal arrangements when PC activists "get cracking" in Scotland: deer stalking or grouse cruelty by lousy shots or salmon not humanely despatched on landing. The outcome of the vote was inevitable in a Labour government lacking in principle.

JIM VICKERS,

London W8.

Lookalike

Neanderthal Man

Chris Smith

Sir,

*So now we know: they **are** related.*

Yours faithfully,
GARETH REEVES,

Durham.

Organ transplant

Sir,

Come on guys, I know you're mainly Oxbridge types, but Ziggurat is the organ of the UEA Society – ie, University of East Anglia – not just Anglia as wrongly stated on page 11, Pseuds Corner.

Keep up the good work, naturally.

MARK FLEMING,

UEA 1985-88.

Santa cause

Sir,

Duncan Campbell's ridiculously pedantic letter criticising your cartoon showing Father Christmas using penguins as bowling pins overlooks the fact that Santa visits the southern hemisphere at least once a year. It is therefore entirely feasible that he stopped off in Antarctica to enjoy a spot of penguin bowling as a break from his hectic schedule.

Yours faithfully,
JIM McCABE (aged 7),

Edinburgh.

Serpent's tale

Sir,

RGJ's cartoon of the serpents and Adam (Eye 1018) misses the essential point.

We don't buy organic just because it is better for us and the environment. When supermarkets and other retailers get the message that there is a demand, more producers will be encouraged to grow food sustainably and a competitive market in assured organic food can develop.

Yours,
JEM CHARLES,

York.

Catchy title

Sir,

Re: Ad Nauseam, on Lever Bros' plans to rename Jif Cream as Cif Cream,

When I was a student I had a friend whose father was a bigwig at Unilever. He told me that "Cif" had been rejected as the product name in the UK, because it sounded like a "certain well-known venereal disease".

What a poxy idea.

Yours,
RICHARD BEATON,

Lewes, East Sussex.

College lecture

Sir,

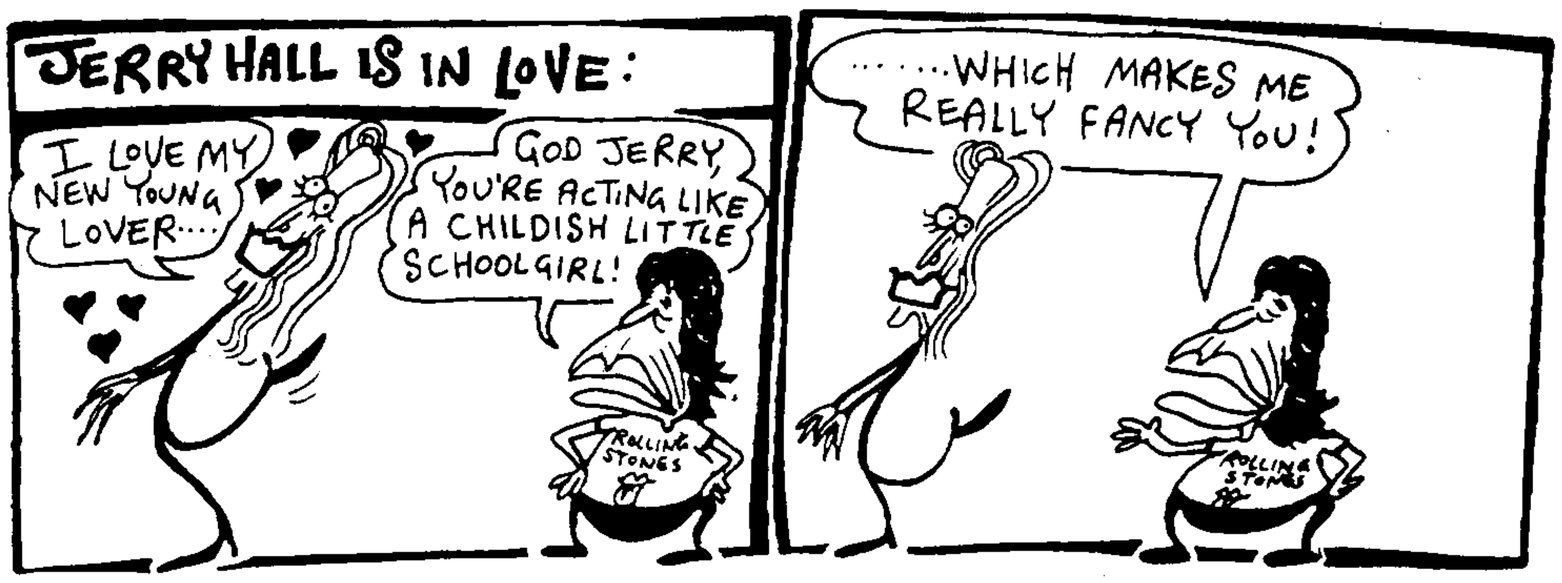
I can understand why Piloti might have wanted to poke feeble fun at the Falkland Islands Memorial Chapel for its resemblance to other modern buildings (1018), but awarding it the prize for the worst building of 2000 seems particularly feeble. I would hate to think that Piloti had based his judgement on the exterior of the building alone. Or does the dramatic interior of a new building and the seamless blending of its dual function of national monument and college chapel not count for anything, architecturally? Readers who might like to judge for themselves are reminded that the chapel is open to the public seven days a week.

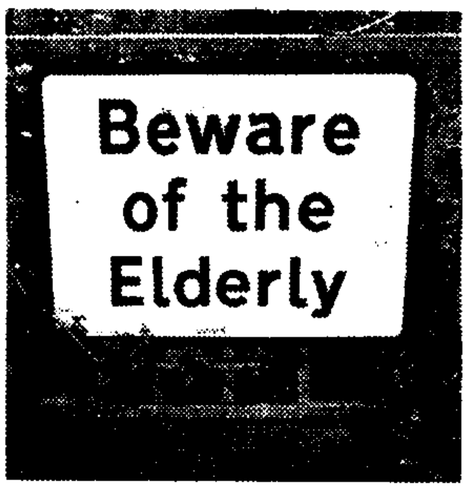
K.M. GREIG,

Headmaster, Pangbourne College.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


JERRY HALL IS IN LOVE:
I LOVE MY NEW YOUNG LOVER....
GOD JERRY, YOU'RE ACTING LIKE A CHILDISH LITTLE SCHOOLGIRL!
ROLLING STONES
.....WHICH MAKES ME REALLY FANCY YOU!
ROLLING STONES



I-SPY

Llandrindod Wells

Submitted by J. Hardiman. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Biter bit

Sir,

Unlike the masochistically inclined contestants, on "The Weakest Link", Winking Ann has the opportunity to read the questions in advance of each broadcast to check pronunciation of difficult words. Doesn't she? How delightful it is, then, to hear such fruity efforts as "Hippo-lighter" for the statuesque Queen of the Amazons and "Her-my-owny" for the ultimately unstatuesque Queen of "The Winter's Tale".

Regards,
RICHARD HUGHES,
Hale, Cheshire.

Family fortunes

Sir,

Re: The Murdoch Family Empire in Eye 1019. I was surprised to read that the saying I learnt in pre-war Brum, "clogs to clogs in three generations", is actually "...the traditional Chinese wizard's warning..."

Yours etc,
NORMAN T. SHEPHERD,
Bristol.

JUST FANCY THAT

Consignia

Connaught

NATIONAL LOTTERY CHARITIES BOARD

Hot topic

Sir,

It's nice to see that great old urban legend of the microwaved night watchman kept alive by Funny Old World (Eye 1019), even if the scene of the hoax has been moved from Canada to Alaska. The original story, along with a link to the confession of the hoaxer, can be found at http://www.darwinawards.com/legends/legends1998-11.html or in the (very good) Darwin Awards book.

JAMES DONNELLY,
Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

"Clotting or non-clotting?"

LUVVIES

She [Hermione Norris] says she has never wanted to be an actress. "It's not really a case of wanting to do it. It's like a sick compulsion, a huge addiction. If I could choose to have a simple way of life and work in a tea shop in Loch Ness, I would love that. But I'm not designed that way. I need to keep stimulating myself, need to keep putting myself in situations."

Interview by GARETH MCLEAN,
Guardian

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

Interviewer: *What do you think will happen if sperm donors' identities are revealed to their offspring?*
Fertility expert: *It would be disastrous! They would just stop coming.*
Radio 4
(Joe McGrath)

"In the bottom nine positions of the league (D1) there are nine teams."
BBC1
(V. Boyd)

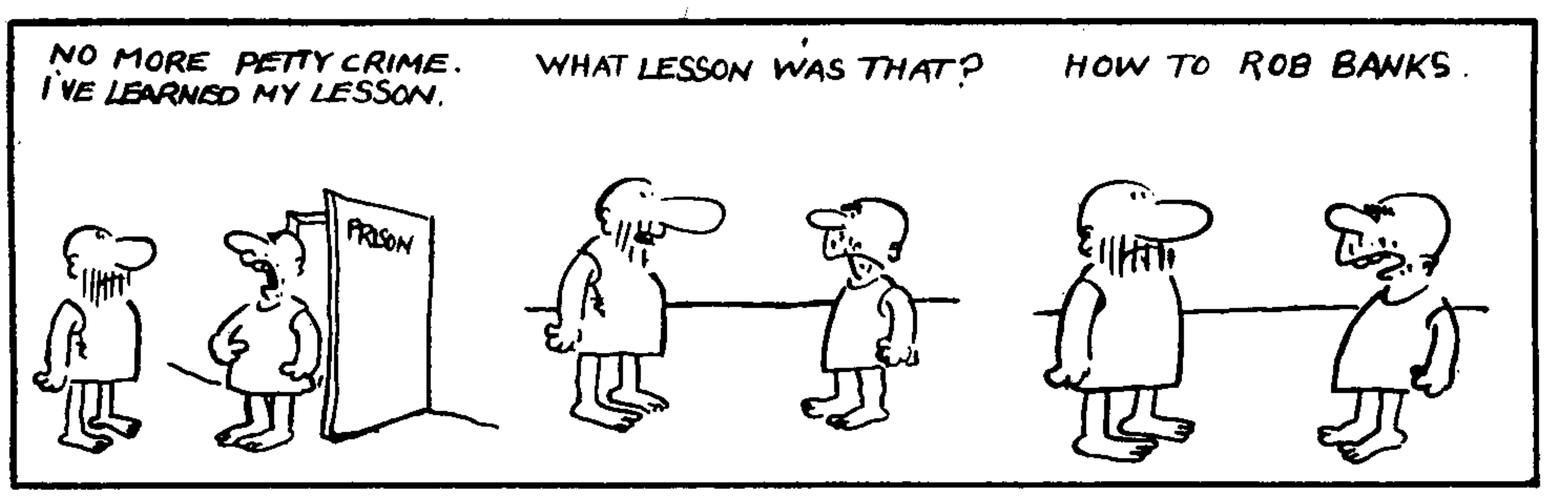
"Saddam Hussein made a long, rambling broadcast, full of rhetorical questions, most of which remained unanswered."
Commentator, Radio 4
(Jane Kelly)

"Skipper Moin Khan has really earned his socks out there today."
CHRIS COWDREY, Talksport
(Bernard Hughes)

"There's always one [FA Cup 3rd round upset] and the egg at the moment is heading squarely for Charlton's door!"
STEVE WILSON, Radio 5
(Dr Miles C. Allison)

HOM SAP

AUSTIN



Letter from **Chile**
from Our Own Correspondent

WE CAN'T deny it: those crazy Pinochets do make us chuckle. As our courts have just demonstrated, they're really just a bundle of laughs – once you put aside memories about how the dictator's men obliged one of their prisoners to bugger his own son as that same son was being forced to bugger his brother.

There is, for instance, the lively tale of the globetrotting Augusto Pinochet Jr, the torturer and drug dealer's eldest son, and Veronica, his formidable wife. Things went well when the couple was living in Los Angeles, where the former army captain was on the staff of the Chilean consulate-general. Onerous though his official duties must have been, he appears to have found time to help run a travel agency on the premises while also claiming to have made a start in the arms business. With Dad's connections and boasting to be an adviser to Libya's Colonel Gadaffi, his career seemed to take off. Under what circumstances the Chilean armed forces saw fit to pay him $3m in 1988 have never been made clear, however.

A year later, the family moved to Sacramento to start a business selling body-building kits. It was there that things began to go wrong. Veronica had her own ideas about bodies and took up with a muscular Chilean bodyguard. Her husband quickly had our courts give him custody of the children. She then appealed for FBI protection from Augusto Jr's constant death threats.

Wisely or not she returned home to Santiago, but the rows continued. In 1992, in the face of what she said were continuing threats, beatings and torture, she took a pistol and shot him in the ankle in self-defence. Obviously this violent woman, who was clearly unable to take a joke, couldn't be allowed to get away with not only cuckolding but also physically injuring the heir of one of the finest generals the western hemisphere has seen. So Augusto Jr sued.

On new year's eve the supreme court announced its verdict. It found in favour of Veronica. Hilarious! Her victory will now surely prompt even our hopelessly timorous government to look again at the those 1988 army payments. The investigation will be all the easier since the 27-year campaign to keep quiet the dictatorship's profitable relationship with sundry drug dealers is falling apart.

The publishing sensation of recent months in Santiago has been *La Delgada Linea Blanca* (*The Thin White Line*), which sets out in unassailable detail the close collaboration between the Pinochets and some of their more unorthodox business partners. It chronicles how our consular offices in Los Angeles were active in the narcotics trade at just the time Augusto Jr served there.

The book also highlights links between our former first family, the dictator's secret police and Monzer al Kassar, a fun-loving Syrian who was once imprisoned on drugs charges in London and later denied entry to Britain. Such an apparent blemish did not, however, prevent him from becoming his country's ambassador in Poland, Bulgaria and India. He now lives in inordinate luxury at the Palacio Mifadil on Spain's Costa del Crime. But in late 1999 al-Kassar suffered the indignity of having his funds in Geneva's Audi Bank seized by Laurent Kasper-Ansermet, the city's investigating magistrate and one of the word's most feared drug-busters.

Al-Kassar's *homme d'affaires* here was his Chilean-born cousin Yamal Edgardo Bathich, partner of the old torturer's other son, the jolly Marco Antonio. The revelation leaves his brother more than a little exposed. Why exactly, we are asking, did the army give Augusto Jr those three cheques for $3m? Was he really an associate of Colonel Gadaffi? Why did the Chamber of Deputies take no action on the evidence it was given? Why, in May 1993, did the army, still under Pinochet's command, threaten violence if the Council for the Defence of the State (CDE) continued with the investigation of what became known amusingly as the Pinocheques? Why, a month later, did the judge in charge of the investigation declare it was "outside his competence"? Why was the same judge shortly afterwards promoted to the appeal court? Why, finally, did President Eduardo Frei insist in June 1995 that the CDE abandon the investigation of the Pinocheques "for reasons of state"? And what were those reasons?

Not everyone is amused by such fun and games. Our generals say they impugn the honour of the armed forces. But that's the biggest joke of the lot! How could the military have any honour after what they did?

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

"Make no mistake. Willpower will win us every championship," football coach Bill Cedars told reporters who had gathered to watch the Naklua soccer team begin their weekly training session in Pattaya, Thailand. "Youthful, budding players like these need to develop their mental stamina. And there is no better way to do that than by learning to walk barefoot over broken glass."

But centre forward Lee Yan Koon was less enthusiastic about Bill Cedar's revolutionary training methods. "Before Bill got into meditation, we used to practise shooting, dribbling, and sprinting, just like other teams. But now he just makes us take our boots off and walk over broken glass every week, and it's a disaster. Every session ends with

him driving us all to the government hospital in the club minibus. None of us can kick the ball properly, because our feet are all cut to ribbons, and most of us can barely walk. We haven't been able to field a complete team since Easter, and we're the only club in the league without a single point to its name. Most of the team are wearing fluffy slippers for comfort during the day, and we look effeminate. That cannot be right." *(Pattaya Mail, 22/10/00. Spotter: Neil Griffiths)*

— o —

"We all know that South Africa has one of the highest incidences of rape in the world," Dr Jaap Haumann told a news conference in Bloemfontein, Orange Free State, "and I resolved to do something about it. That's why I devised the Killer Tampon. Believe me, if this device was being worn by women everywhere, would-be-rapists would think twice, or even three times before they dared to attack."

Dr Haumann, a seventy-two-year-old farmer from Clocolan, then demonstrated how his device operated. "It's inserted and worn in the same way as a normal tampon, but there are two major differences. Firstly, it's wider than a normal tampon. And secondly, although the outside is covered by this soft material, inside there is a hard plastic core which contains a spring-loaded blade. When the rapist attacks and penetration takes place, the point of his penis will touch the section containing the blade, this trigger here will be release the spring, and the attacker's penis will be sliced away like salami until it's all off. Shaft, glans, the lot. I've conducted tests, and it's been almost 100% reliable so far. And best of all, one size fits all."

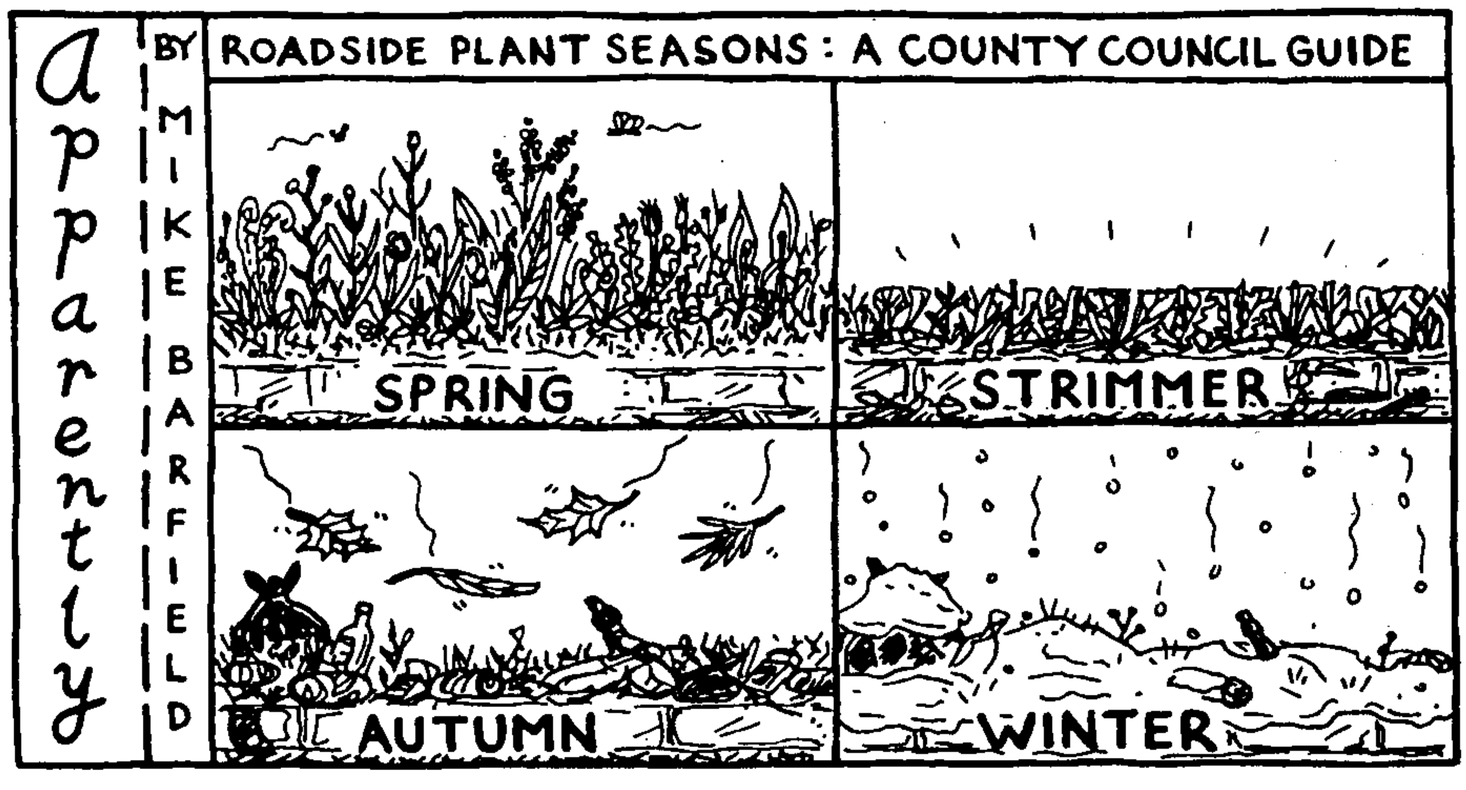
But women who were asked to test the product responded negatively. "I set off the metal detector in the airport", said one, "and my evening was ruined by an unnecessary and very personal examination which ended in tears for all concerned". *(Pretoria News, 23/12/00. Spotter: John Caterer)*

— o —

"My boss, Nikitas Kotiadis, was running very late for his flight to Brussels," his personal assistant told a court in Athens, "and he was worried that he might miss the plane. About an hour before it was due to take off, he came into my office and asked me to telephone Axon Airlines anonymously, and tell them that there was a bomb on board his flight. He thought that this would delay the plane until he got to the airport. I wasn't very happy about the idea, but he is my employer, so I obeyed him."

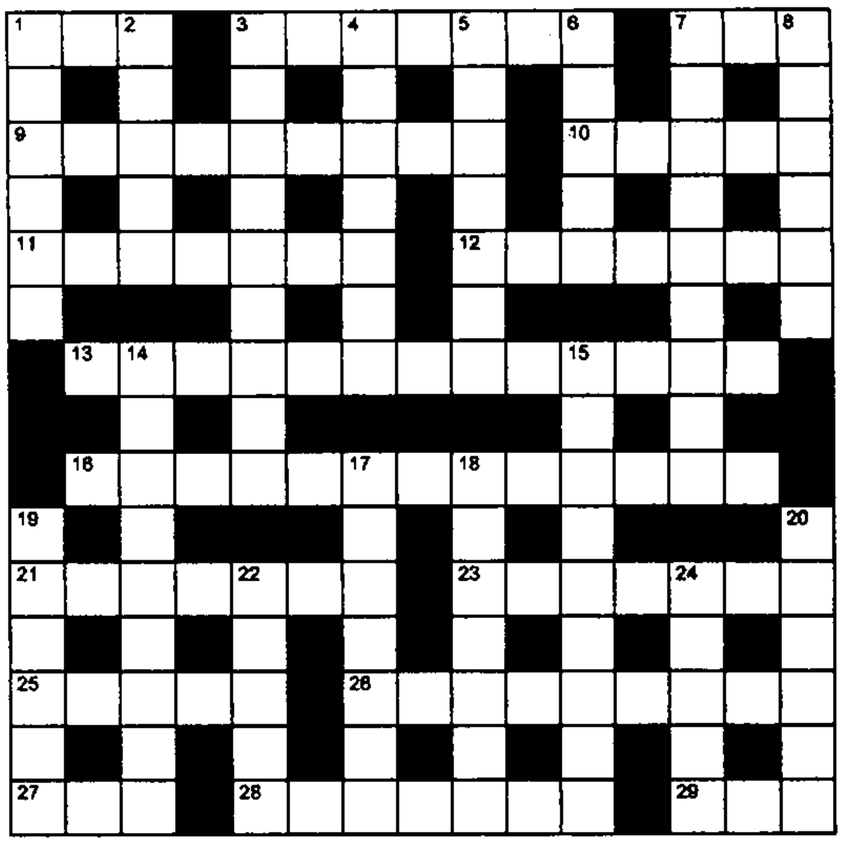
Speaking during the trial of her boss, the assistant (whose name was withheld by the court) explained what happened next. "I called Axon, and I didn't give my name. I simply told them that I was calling on behalf of Mr Nikitas Kotiadis, and then read out the message he'd written: 'This is not a joke, someone is preparing to put a bomb on your 3:30 flight to Brussels.' Then I put the phone down. My boss left for the airport, and he was arrested as soon as he arrived, and charged with attempted murder. I suppose the airline people must have noted his name down, when I telephoned. I wasn't surprised, but I'd done exactly what he'd asked me to do, and I feel that I acted professionally throughout."

Mr Kotiadis was sentenced to seven months imprisonment, but paid a fine and was set free. He sacked his assistant immediately after the trial. (Athens News, 23/11/00. Spotter: Barry Lloyd)



EYE CROSSWORD 175

by Cyclops *£100 prize*



ACROSS

1 Name Eden's endless downfall (3)
3 Tank in which Posh deflowered Brenda and servant (7)
7 Pleasure a woman ... (3)
9 ... very old, into humping and getting frisky (9)
10 Blair's first encounter with topless movie star produces windy outburst (5)
11 Be contentious – decline to swallow phlegm without hesitation (7)
12 Reckoning on getting mostly roasted, sets off the foxhunting fraternity (5-2)
13 Arse-licking, ironically? (6-2-5)
16 Bras undone at end of parade by remarkable military force, mainly for show (5-8)
21 Close couple's bedroom habit (7)
23 Poor sod who has to get the software to work endures breakdown! (3,4)
25 Brown's first to retreat from him? (5)
26 Well executed speech – cert to wriggle out of the chair's purpose (9)
27 Dick's fortnightly treat (3)
28 Not a complete arse, however sound (7)
29 An adolescent outburst, being the last to have sex? (3)

DOWN

1 A little stiff getting up, look round and pull out (6)
2 Still around for some sad lives? (5)
3 Pisspoor surgeon takes credit for sponging bum (9)
4 Dire magazine with look of the bad speller (4,3)
5 Explosive power rating of Jasper, say, getting an erection, upset Nato (7)
6 Not a clanger long dropped by the prize donor (5)
7 Sweet girl holds in belly somehow (5,4)
8 Oh boy! A pathetic, derisive ejaculation (3,3)
14 A drink of extreme Protestants requiring aural assistance (9)
15 Not quite pissed if there's an equal amount left in the glass (4,5)
17 Spin, etc. unfortunately required for what Blair hopes Labour supporters will do (2-5)
18 Vibrator's effect – lot more excitement (7)
19 Not up to appearing in *Sun*? A blessing! (6)
20 Willy with scorch mark on the end of it (6)
22 Beat heartless lover-boy (5)
24 Southern speed (no heroin) scam (5)

£100 prize to first solution opened on 2.2.01. Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN.

Solution to Crossword No. 174

Winner: C.P. McMAHON

ACROSS: 1/9 Pissing in the wind 6 Sugar 10 On a roll 11 Prostrate 12 Buyer 13 Offal 15 Hamilton 18 All-sorts 20 Credo 22 Stiff 23 Feel a fool 25 Rioting 26 Edified 27 Befog 28 Yard of ale.

DOWN: 1 Put-up job 2 Sees off 3 Idiot 4 Godfather 5 Noose 6 Shambolic 7 Gromyko 8 Ruler 14 Last fling 16 Musketeer 17 Coolidge 19 Laid off 21 Erotica 22 Scrub 23 Fogey 24 Amigo.

Legal News

One Man Jury To Replace Old System

by Joshua Rozenbeard

Grobbelaar vs. The Digger

IN a landmark ruling the Court of Appeal today ruled that the so-called "Twelve Good Men And True" system should be overturned in the interests of justice.

"We propose," said Lord Simon Cocklecarrot (sitting with Lord Goodlunch and Lord Claretface), "that in future the Jury should consist of only one man (or woman if we have to have that) who should be suitably qualified.

"We are thinking of a person such as a High Court Judge who could come to a sensible decision preferably before lunch on the first day.

"This way, instead of twelve idiots coming to the wrong decision, one can now do it on his own."

Solicitors: Sue, Grabbit and Runne for Mr Grobbelaar and Vile, Creep and Stooge for The Sun Newspaper.

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Daily Mail

– Wastepaper of the Year

Lewis Morley

The Most Sensational New Book That Lifts The Lid On The Shocking Events You Don't Remember

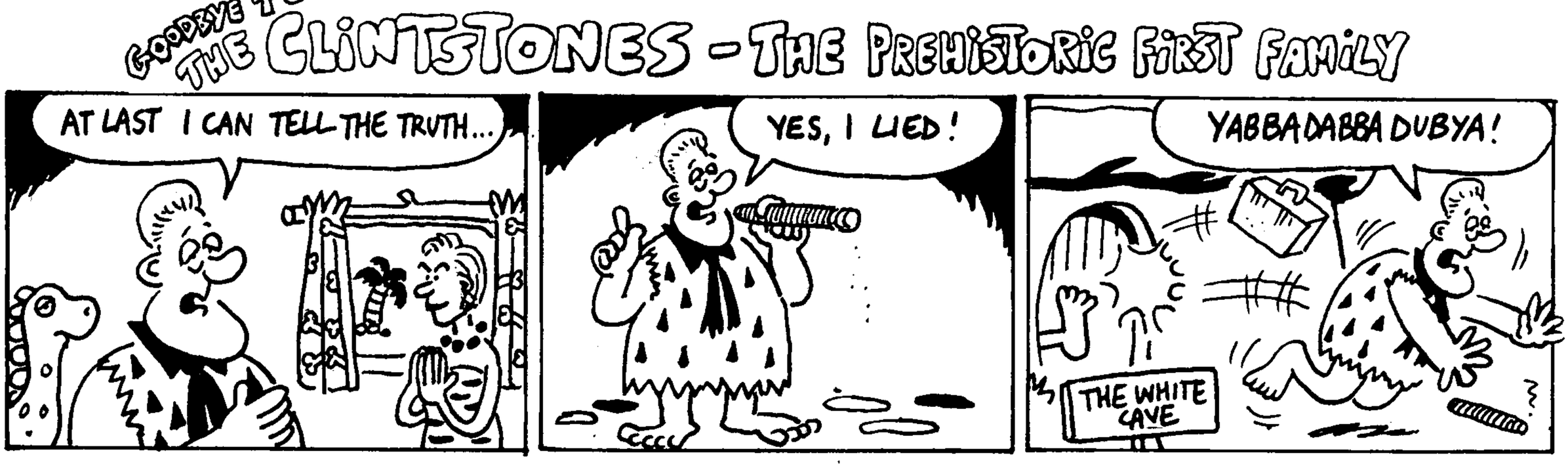
CHRISTINE KEELER – My Story

(as told to Phil Book)

All this week in the Daily Madeup you can read how:

- **Lord Denning wanted me to dress up in his wig and black undies.**
- **Harold Macmillan was a Russian agent working for top spymaster Simon Dee.**
- **Society osteopath Stephen Ward was in fact a woman.**
- **Harold Wilson, real name George Smiley, had a secret love-child with Mandy Rice-Davies called Peregrine Worsthorne.**

Read all this and more as Christine makes it up every day.


GOODBYE TO THE CLINTSTONES - THE PREHISTORIC FIRST FAMILY
AT LAST I CAN TELL THE TRUTH...
YES, I LIED!
YABBADABBA DUBYA!
THE WHITE CAVE

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

I want to share with you all this week my feeling of frustration at the way some people have chosen to misrepresent my non-appearance at the meeting in the Church Hall last week to debate the pros and cons of fox-hunting.

Some of the more unChristian parishioners have even accused me of cowardice, as if I were a fox running away from Mrs Mallalieu and her ladies who had gathered on horseback outside the hall!

Well, really! Look, let's get my position on this quite clear. It was me who organised the meeting. It was me who insisted that everyone should turn up.

And it was me who made it absolutely clear that in this modern age there was no place at all for a totally barbaric and cruel so-called sport like fox-hunting.

And in that sense it is easily the most important moral issue confronting our society today.

So, why wasn't I at the meeting, you may ask? The answer is very simple!

As the Vicar, I have a very busy diary, and hundreds of things to do on behalf of the parish. And I can't be in two places at once, much as I would often like to be!

The truth is that, after I had arranged last week's meeting, Mr Campbell reminded me that I had a very important and long-standing commitment in Belfast which I simply could not get out of.

There is nothing I would have liked more than to be with you all at the meeting on Wednesday, and even listening to Mrs Mortimer shouting "bastard" at me as I entered the hall!

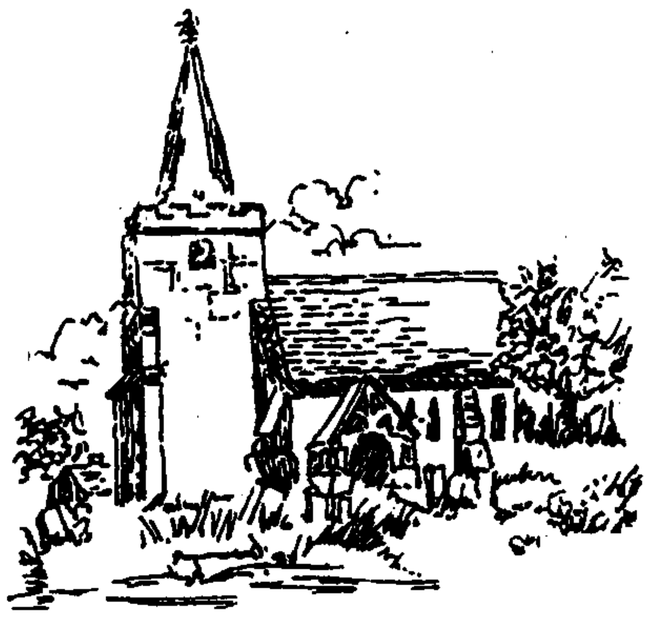
But let's be honest. When it comes to priorities, the welfare of a few foxes doesn't exactly compare with the need to sort out the problems we've been having with our Mission to Northern Ireland.

That's why it was absolutely vital that I should fly over to have dinner with Mr Mandelson on Wednesday night, rather than have rotten tomatoes thrown at me outside the Church Hall by a lot of lunatic women on a cold night in January!

I was thus able to hear at first-hand just what a superb job I had done in appointing Peter to run the Mission! The Mission Hall has only been burned down twice since Christmas, which marks a real step forward in achieving our ambition to bring people together!

I was able to tell Peter this myself, on behalf of all of you, over a lovely dinner of salsa beans and guacamole chiquitos, beautifully prepared by Peter's partner Ronaldo!

So, let's not have any more of this talk



of me running away from my responsibilities on this frankly fairly minor issue of fox-hunting, which people keep going on about as if it was the only thing in the world which mattered!

I will organise as many meetings on the need to ban hunting as people in the parish want. But you can't expect me to attend any of them!

Now what could be braver than that?

Tally ho!

Tony

A Hymn For Septuagesima

Little foxy, little foxy,
With your bushy tail,
Keep on running, keep on running,
Over hill and dale.
Little foxy, little foxy,
Hiding in your Lair,
Don't you worry, don't you worry,
Here comes the Reverend Blair!

Words and music T. Blair 2001.

To Remember In Your Prayers

■ Ms Germaine Greer, who has sent a rude e-mail round the parish accusing the Vicar's wife of acting like a "concubine" by attending the bring-and-buy sale and other parish functions. Give her strength to remember in a quiet moment of reflection that she herself may be, in a very real sense, a sour, bitter and twisted old witch who is nobody's concubine, let alone their wife! T.B.

St Albion's Hospice

Mr Milburn writes: I have had a number of letters from parishioners complaining that their deceased loved ones have been found piled up in a broom cupboard. As the Vicar rightly says, this is not our fault and the people in charge should be ashamed of themselves. A.M.

A Statement From Mr Mandelson

There is no link between Mr Gobby Hinduja's generous donation to the Millennium Tent and the letter from my secretary asking the Vicar to sign his passport application.

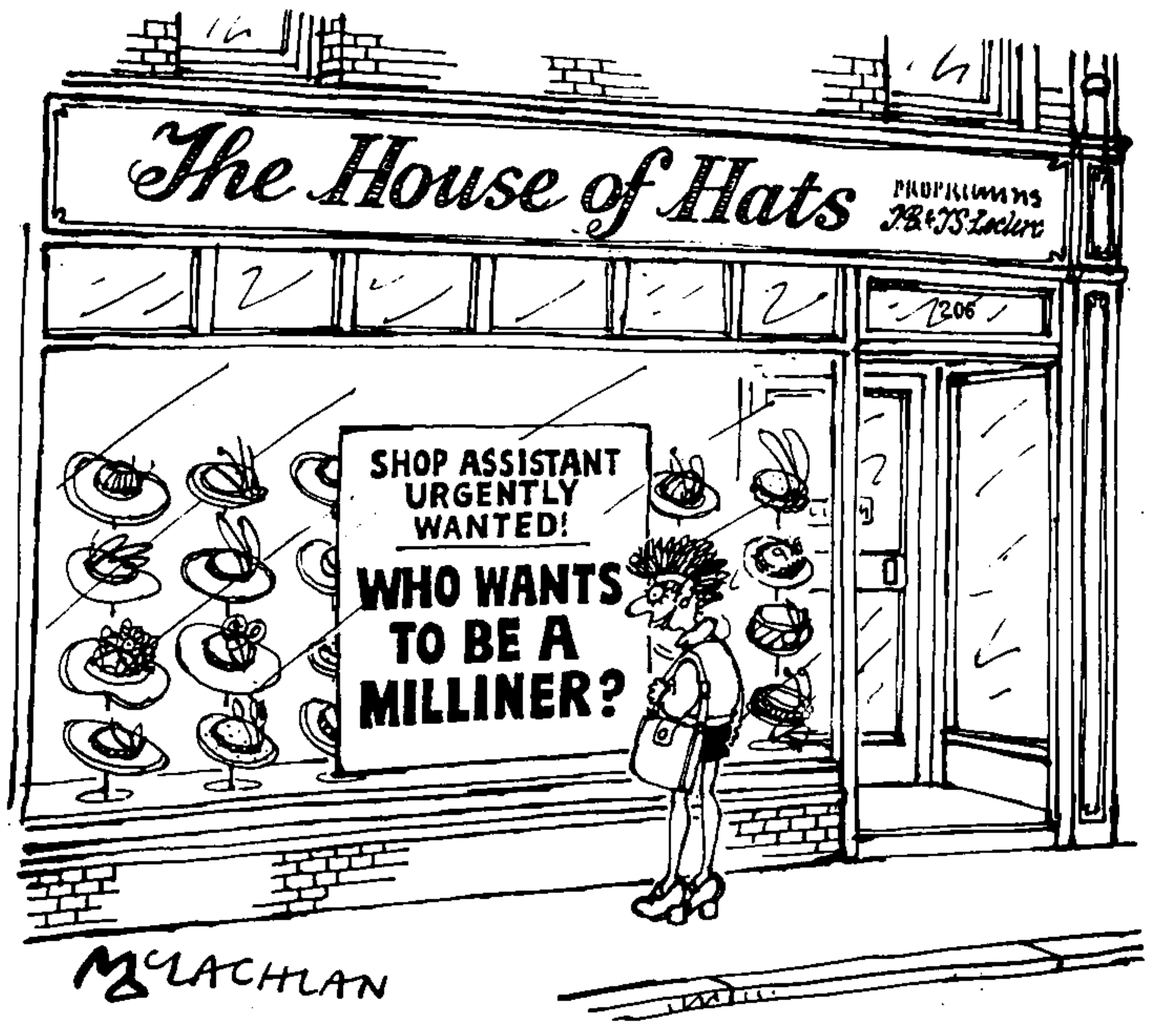
I was not involved in any way and merely told Mr Hinduja that I would see what could be done on his behalf.

I would have provided this small act of charity to any other member of the parish who had offered me a million pounds. P.M.

Pre-Lent Workshop

The Importance of Marriage *(held at Mrs Bourne's house on January 17)*

The Vicar led the discussion by saying that marriage was very important in this day and age, and studies had shown that this was definitely the best way to bring up children. Mrs Blair said she agreed, so long as both partners shared the responsibilities of parenting and housework, particularly if the wife had a more important job than the husband! Mr Cook agreed, but pointed out that divorce was also a good thing, because you couldn't necessarily get it right the first time around, as Mrs Dewar had found out when she became Mrs Lairg. Mr Smith and his partner then pointed out stable same-sex relationships were often better than straight marriages, too many of which ended in divorce, like Mr Straw's, Mr Milburn's and several other members of the PCC. Mrs Jay then made a passionate speech in support of having relationships with other people's husbands, saying they were equally valid in their own way, and could lead to a permanent, loving and fulfilling relationship which could last for several years. The Vicar summed up by saying that it had been a very thought-provoking evening, and that he felt many people's long-held views had been challenged by what they had heard. He thanked everyone for coming, and particularly Mrs Bourne for serving a delicious tea of smoked salmon sandwiches and champagne.



World of Boxing

STANDING OVATION FOR 'GREATEST-EVER' CHAMPION

by Our Man At The Ringside **Harrods Carpenter**

HE WAS the greatest. That was the unanimous verdict of thousands of celebrities who gathered at the Dorchester Hotel yesterday to honour Mohamed Ali Fayed, former World Heavyweight Liar and Champion Crook Of All Time.

"I am the fuggin' greatest!" the champion told his audience, delighting them with endless repetition of his celebrated catchphrase, "Fug like a butterfly, fug like a bee".

He was then led away by his manager Mr Clifford, who said "Mohamed has got Parkinson's Disease – he wants to be on the show, and I think I can fix it for him."

My Secret Shame

By Charles Spencer

For years I had been trying to hide my guilty secret from my friends, my family and myself.

But then one night my wife discovered me slumped over a word processor and I had to face the truth.

Yes, I write for the Daily Telegraph.

But now I am completely cured and that is why, as proof, I have written a huge piece about my problem in the Daily Telegraph.

There was no point in denying it any longer. What had started with just a couple of pieces had become a full-blown career.

Blotto Paper

My friends thought I was just an amiable middle-aged drunk who fell asleep underneath rhododendron bushes. But, in reality, I was hiding from them the fact that I was seeking every opportunity to nip into Canary Wharf and get utterly published.

Luckily, I have now received help from Telegraph Anonymous, a support group for those who can't resist "putting a few pieces away". I have at last recognised that I have a problem and that my behaviour over the last few years has been a disgrace. I look back at some of my articles and cringe with embarrassment.

Charles Boozer's Top Plays of 2000

- Four Gentlemen Of Verona
- Twelve Characters In Search Of A Drink
- The Long, The Short And The Tall Glass Please Barman
- The Blue Room Appears To Be Going Round
- Anything At The Under The Bush Theatre, Hampstead

(That's enough plays. Ed.)

NEW FEARS OVER BOXING

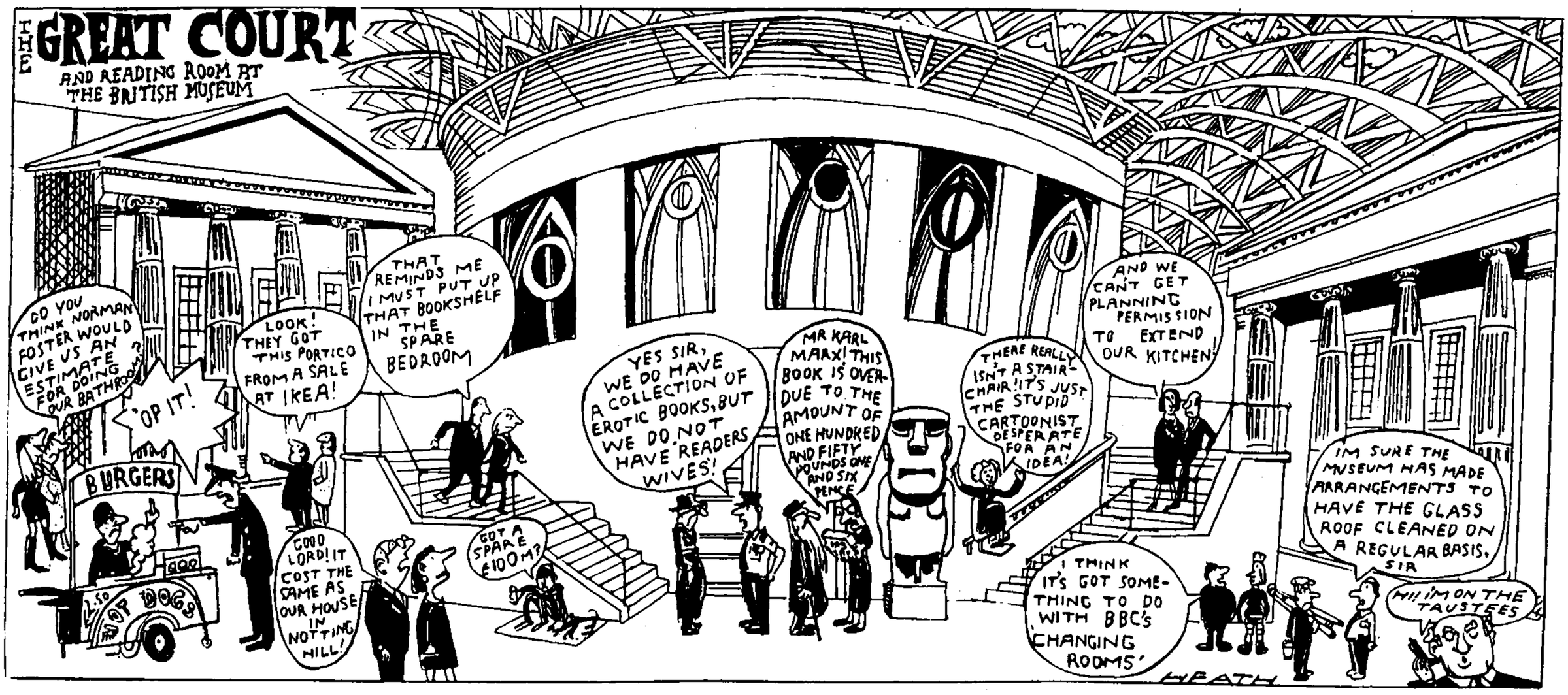
by Our Health Staff **Dr James Le Fthook**

MEDICAL experts last night were calling for more research into the damaging effects to the brain of the sport of boxing.

Damning evidence has recently come to light that links repeated blows to the head and brain damage.

Experts point to the case of the former heavyweight Frank Bruno who, after a long career in the ring, suddenly announced that he wanted to become a Conservative MP. Friends and family were shocked and (*continued Round 94)*

HEATH'S PRIVATE VIEW


THE GREAT COURT
AND READING ROOM AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM
DO YOU THINK NORMAN FOSTER WOULD GIVE US AN ESTIMATE FOR DOING OUR BATHROOM?
'OP IT!
BURGERS
HOT DOGS
LOOK! THEY GOT THIS PORTICO FROM A SALE AT IKEA!
THAT REMINDS ME I MUST PUT UP THAT BOOKSHELF IN THE SPARE BEDROOM
GOOD LORD! IT COST THE SAME AS OUR HOUSE IN NOTTING HILL!
GOT A SPARE £100M?
YES SIR, WE DO HAVE A COLLECTION OF EROTIC BOOKS, BUT WE DO NOT HAVE READERS WIVES!
MR KARL MARX! THIS BOOK IS OVERDUE TO THE AMOUNT OF ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY POUNDS ONE AND SIX PENCE
THERE REALLY ISN'T A STAIR-CHAIR! IT'S JUST THE STUPID CARTOONIST DESPERATE FOR AN IDEA!
AND WE CAN'T GET PLANNING PERMISSION TO EXTEND OUR KITCHEN!
I THINK IT'S GOT SOMETHING TO DO WITH BBC'S CHANGING ROOMS'
IM SURE THE MUSEUM HAS MADE ARRANGEMENTS TO HAVE THE GLASS ROOF CLEANED ON A REGULAR BASIS, SIR
HI! IM ON THE TAUSTEES
HEATH

NEW CHILDREN'S BOOKS

The Little Red Ken Goes To New York

ONE day little Red Ken went to New York. "I am going off to see the Mayor," he said. And on the way, Ken noticed that all the streets were as clean as a whistle, everyone was happy and smiling, there were no muggers and all the subway trams ran on time. "Goodness me," cried the little Red Ken, as he looked up at all the exciting tall buildings. "Wouldn't it be lovely if London was like this?" "And so it can be," said a genial figure, who turned out to be the Mayor himself. "I am Mayor Stringemup," he told the little Red Ken, "how about you and your little pet newt coming for a ride with me in this elevator?"

And so they went up to the 112th floor, where they looked out at Mayor Stringemup's city. And the Mayor told the Red Ken the secret of how it was done. " When people are naughty," he said, "we bring them up here and throw them off. I call it zero-tolerance."

And the little Red Ken said, "What a good idea! I must write about this in the Guardian when I go home."

NEXT WEEK: The little Red Ken tries to starve all the Trafalgar Square pigeons to death.

CRIME FIGURES ARE UP OR DOWN

Knacker Spells It Out

by Our Crime Staff **Nicked Ross** and **Sue Crook**

AT A major press conference attended by Home Secretary Jack Straw, Inspector "Knacker of the Yard" Knacker yesterday announced that crime figures were up or down, according to which way you hold the graph.

Holding it one way up, Britain's top policeman pointed to a huge fall in last year's crime figures, showing what a superb job he and his colleagues had done.

He then turned the graph upside down, to show an alarming increase in crime, which demonstrated the vital need for billions more pounds to be spent on hiring millions more police officers.

P.C. World

At this point, Mr Straw intervened to congratulate Inspector Knacker on his "superb achievement" in getting crime both up and down at the same time.

"This government," he said, "is committed to getting everything up and down. Waiting lists are up, operations are down. Class sizes are up, standards are down. Labour are up, the Tories are down. It all makes sense whichever way you look at it."

On Other Pages
Dando Killer – New Clue

ADVERTISEMENT

New (Young) Models From FORD!!

Buy now on the Internet
(but don't let the boss catch you!)

The Ford Escort Agency

The Ford Hardcortina

The Ford Kor

The Ford Trans-sexual

Just click on Phwoard's website, and within minutes you will be visited by the police!

Ford

NEWS IN BRIEF

Skeletons Found In Cupboard

MINISTERS were furious last night that their efforts to build public confidence in the NHS had been denied by the highly embarrassing discovery of skeletons in one of their cupboards.

A health chief commented: "We are appalled at this disturbing find, and I apologise for the considerable distress caused to the Government by these skeletons – we hope we can avoid this kind of thing in the future, and promise that we won't make the same mistake of getting caught again."

(Reuters)

Help For Inner Cities

TONY BLAIR today announced plans to give run-down areas of Britain £800 million of extra funding.

"This money is being spent to ensure that by May every one of these areas has a Labour MP," said the PM. *(Reuters)*

'Fifty Percent Cut' Promises Branson

RICHARD Branson has shocked many of his competitors by announcing a further 50% cut in passengers on Virgin rail.

"We'll be achieving this by the usual methods – cancelled trains, late running services, appalling service and inaccurate timetables." *(Reuters)*

Britain Witnesses Rare Astrological Event

THE whole of the UK was mesmerised by a rare sighting of a large red object spotted in the skies of Britain for a whole two minutes.

The unique phenomenon was identified by one astronomer as "the sun". "I hope everyone rushed out and looked at it," said another excited astronomer, "as it'll probably be another hundred years before we're likely to see it this clearly over Britain again." *(Reuters)*

BBC Announce More EastEnders

IN A shock announcement, the BBC last night confirmed that EastEnders will soon be broadcast twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. "BBC1 will now become Eastenders 24," said a spokesman. *(Reuters)*

Yobs

JANET AND JOHN

Janet is best friends with Elton John. They love to play. See Janet play. See Elton John play.

Elton John loves flowers. "Look at all my lovely flowers, Janet," he says. "What a lot of fahkin' flowers," says Janet. "Look at all the fahkin' flowers, children."

"I've got lots of shirts too," says Elton John. "Millions of fahkin' shirts," says Janet. "That's fahkin' fantastic."

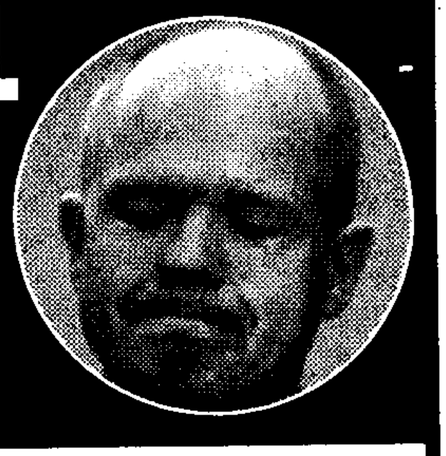
Janet likes to play at newspapers. "You can be in my newspaper," she tells Elton John. See! Elton John is in Janet's newspaper on page three. And on page five. And on page six. And in the Diary. And in the magazine.

"We are going on holiday," says Elton John. "Come to Hawaii with me on the aeroplane."

See Janet go to Hawaii on the aeroplane with Elton John. Or is it Nice this week, or New York?

See! The hacks at the *Indie on Sunday* do not go on the aeroplane. They stay behind in Docklands.

THE SCANDAL OF BABIES FOR SALE



by Our Adoption Staff **Will Foster**

A BRITISH man who has successfully purchased a baby was at the centre of an ethical storm last night amidst calls for an end to "this appalling trade".

The man, a Mr Stuart Wheeler, who is the chief executive of a betting company, simply paid £5 million and purchased little William Hague.

"I've always wanted a politician of my own," said Mr Wheeler, "and now I have one I am delighted. No one is going to take him away from me."

There was, however, a furious reaction from a Mr Michael Ashcroft who was under the impression that *he* had bought little William for £1 million when he was just "a foetus".

"I was looking after William and providing a secure environment in which he could grow up. Then along comes someone else and offers more money. It's a disgrace."

DUMMY

Moral campaigners are worried that Britain is following the example of the United States and allowing baby-faced politicians to be bought for cash.

"It's obscene," said a spokesman. "Only last month there was a scramble over who would own little Tony and now we have the unseemly spectacle of baby William being sold to the highest bidder.

"What about unwanted babies like little Charles Kennedy who sadly *(cont'd. p. 94)*

St Cakes

Transsexual Term begins today. There are 397 girls in the school who used to be boys. Miss C.J.P. Gender-Bender (Hormones) is Head Boy. Miss D.J. Surgical-Procedure (Clinics) is Captain of Lacrosse (formerly Rugby). The Cross(Dress) Country Run will be held on March 7th. The Jan-Morris-Dancing Society will perform on April 3rd (Founderess Day). The Headmaster, Mr R.J. Kipling, wishes to be known from now on as Mrs Dorothy Prendergast. Exeats will be to Sweden on April 11th.

St Cakes is a leading independent public school in the Midlands (No. 1,798 in the National League Tables).

Summer 2001 – Movie Preview

Son of Star Wars: Episode 2 – The Phantom Menace

Youthful Jedi President Obi Wan Kenobi (George W. Bush) is schooled in the way of wasting hundreds of billions of dollars on a discredited missile defence system by his wise old mentor who now talks backwards and falls over a lot, Yoda (Ronald Reagan), despite the evil empire having clearly been destroyed years ago.

■ ***EYE RATING: May the Farce be with you.***

ROY of the LAWYERS
THE SUN ARE 85,000 DOWN IN THE LAST MINUTE. BUT THE REFEREE SUDDENLY CALLS FOR EXTRA TIME MELCHESTER FC'S ACE GOALKEEPER IS FURIOUS
IT'S A FIX
THAT'S MY JOB!
I AM DISALLOWING THE RESULT-AND GIVING A PENALTY OF 1,500,000 AGAINST YOU!
I WAS ROBBED
OR WAS THAT THE PUNTERS?
THEY THINK IT'S ALL OVER THE SUN- IT IS NOW AND IN TOMORROW'S PAPER AND IN THE DAY AFTER'S AND THE DAY AFTER THAT...
GOING DOWN! GOING DOWN!
COOPER

"Ugh! Professional beggars..."

From The Great Smaller In The Sky

Achtung!

So, Mr Blair, you thought that, just because I am dead, you had heard the last of me and my all-conquering Referendum Party.

(Strokes ghost of white cat in sinister fashion)

Well, I have news for you, Double-O Blair. My top agent (codename Lady Annabel Fishpaste) is still very much alive and, how you say, kicking, nicht war?

And this time she is armed with a deadly secret weapon. Five hundred thousand highly-trained English pounds, which are targeted to wipe out the whole of Europe!

With one flick of a switch, Mr Blair, you and your friends will all go up in a puff of smoke!

I am disappointed in you, Mr Blair. I thought maybe we could do business together.

But I see now you are just another ordinary, dull, little politician like all the others.

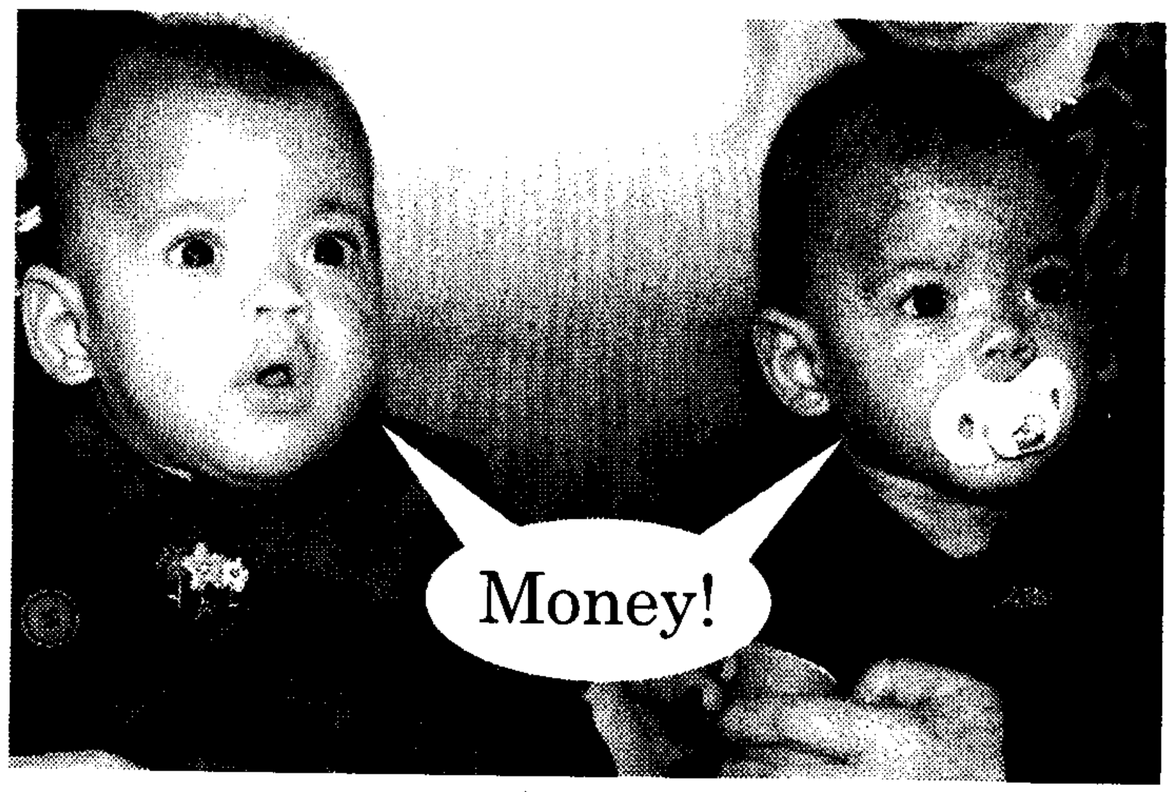
Goodbye, Mr Bond!

Issued on behalf of the late Referendum Party (aka SMERSH) by Lady Evita Goldfish, Richmond Park, Planet Earth.

If you would like to join the great crusade to waste the money of the late Sir James Goldfinger, please apply at once for psychiatric help. Or visit our website on www.jampaste.dotty.con

"Sorry I can't come with you, Ratty and Moley – I'm due at the TB clinic for a check-up"

TWINS' FIRST WORD



The Daily Mailograph

APOLOGY

IN RECENT weeks we may have given the mistaken impression that the practice of tycoons giving million-pound donations to political parties was a national disgrace and that the donations given by the likes of Lords Sainsbury and Hamlyn to the Labour Party devalued British democracy and ultimately threatened to undermine the integrity of Parliament.

We now realise, in the light of Stuart Wheeler's £5 million donation to the Conservative Party, that nothing could be further from the truth and that donations such as Mr Wheeler's help restore British democracy and the integrity of Parliament.

We apologise for any confusion caused, and for any further confusion the next time the identity of a big Labour donor is revealed and we accuse him of devaluing British democracy and threatening the integrity of Parliament.

GAMBLER STAKES £5 MILLION ON HAGUE VICTORY

by Our Racing Staff **Punter Davies** and **Frankie de Tory**

MR Stuart Wheeler, described as a betting professional, today staked an astonishing £5 million on a Conservative victory at the next election.

"At 12,000,000,000 to one," he said, "these were odds I could not resist."

If Mr Hague should be first past the post, Mr Wheeler will win a peerage. *(Surely "£24 trillion zillion"? Ed.)*

On Other Pages

● What an amazing figure! We print lots of pictures of Mr Wheeler's 18- year-old model daughter! 1-94

OLD WOMAN NEARLY FALLS OVER

by Our Entire Staff

AN old woman today nearly fell over while coming out of church.

She was prevented from falling over completely by a slightly less old woman who managed to catch her. *(Reuters)*

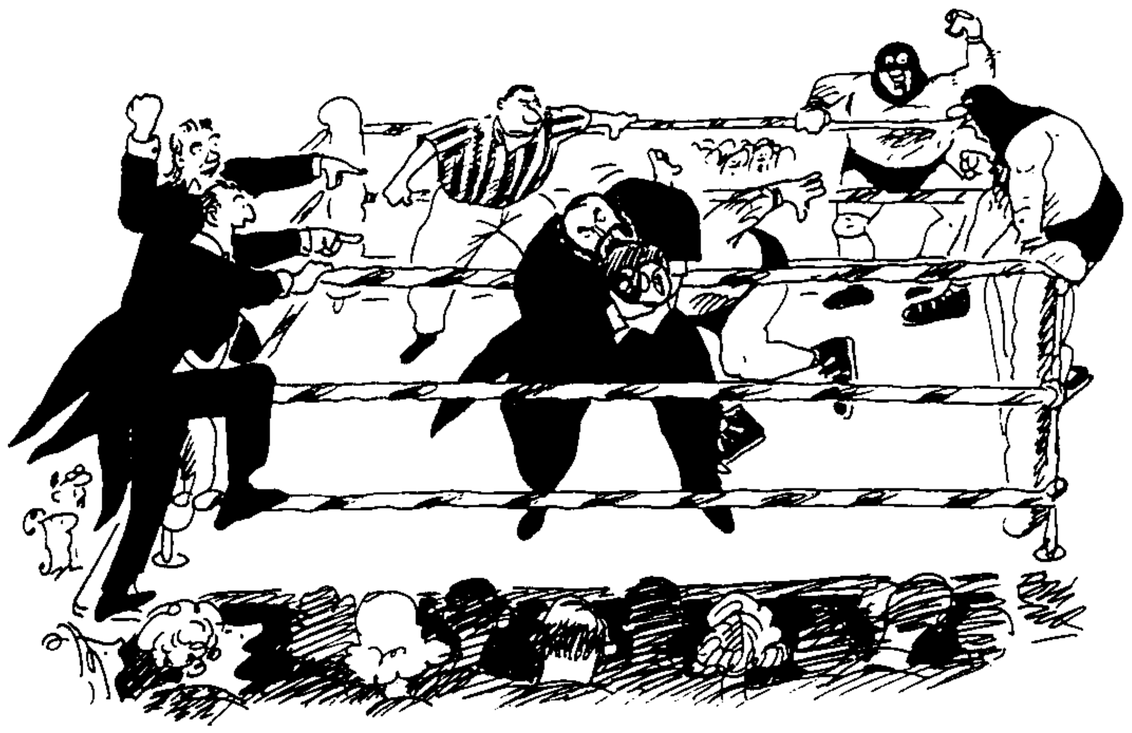
Nearly Falling Over Syndrome by Dr Thomas Stutterfraud 94

Hundreds of pictures of old lady nearly falling over 16-36

The Old Lady and the Blitz by Max Hastings 12

Male naturist members rise

Big Issue North



"I suppose it was inevitable once their voices went"

BIRT MAN TO GET TOP OPERA JOB

by Our Opera Staff **Tagliatelle Verdi**

THE WORLD of opera was rocked to its foundations last night when it was announced that a senior BBC figure is to be the new supremo of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

He is Mr Tony Hall, 54, former head of the BBC's prestigious news department, who is best known for wearing a suit and a pair of glasses.

Shock

Mr Hall immediately an-nounced his shock 405-point plan for "streamlining and modernising" Covent Garden. These include:

- moving the opera house to White City to make it "more efficient and user friendly"
- to move it back to Covent Garden five years later, after realising that no one wanted to go to White City
- moving all opera performances to a "10 o'clock at night slot", to attract a larger audience
- moving them all back again to 7 o'clock after realising that no one was watching
- creating an "internal market" where the singers have to pay for their costumes, and the orchestra hires the score from the Opera House
- abolishing the "internal market" when it is realised that it is losing money
- "rolling opera" available in the foyer 24 hours a day, so that audiences can access opera at all times.

Those New Tony Hall Opera Productions In Full

Mozart's The Magic Roundabout
Mozart's Don G. Armani
Wagner The Ring Nick Ross
Monteverdl The Coronation Street of Poppen
Monteverdi's Flying Circus (repeat)
Bizet Carmen In Suits
(That's enough operas. Ed.)

DEPLETED URANIUM 'A TRIUMPH' says Minister

by Our Defence Staff
Michele Shock

GEOFF HOON, the Secretary of State for Defence, last night defended the use of depleted uranium on the battlefield.

"For years, British weapons have been criticised for not working. Guns have jammed, tanks have malfunctioned and bombs have missed their targets.

"Now, at last, we have a weapon that actually kills people. Unfortunately, it is our own troops and civilians on the other side. Still, it's a start."

Geoff Hoohee is 57 GigaHertz.

'ANIMAL RIGHTS TESTS MUST CONTINUE'

by Our Environment Staff
Terry Wrist

LEADING Animal Rights Authorities claimed last night that their programme of testing bombs on human beings was essential to their work.

"We have to see if these bombs cause death or just serious injury," said a spokesman.

"It is no good being squeamish. If you want to find out whether terrorism is effective in eliminating people you disagree with, then you just have to conduct these trials."

Meanwhile, fanatical Human Rights campaigners said that it was unacceptable in the 21st century that men, women and children should be blown up in the cause of political research.

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

KATE WINSLET

How important are spoons in your life?

I do like spoons, and they are very useful. I mean, as an actress, I drink a lot of tea.

So it's teaspoons mainly that you have?

I suppose so, yes. They're the little ones, aren't they?

But you do have other ones?

I must have. I know we've got a drawer with lots of them in somewhere.

What would your ideal spoon be?

One that I could take on location, that would fit into my handbag. As an actress, you sit around a lot and drink a lot of coffee.

Are there any spoons in your new film?

No, but of course there were lots of them in Titanic. Really posh ones in the dining room scenes.

Were you allowed to keep a spoon as a souvenir?

No, but I wish they had!

Have you ever given anyone a spoon as a present?

Not that I can remember, but I once gave a cheeseknife to some friends who got married.

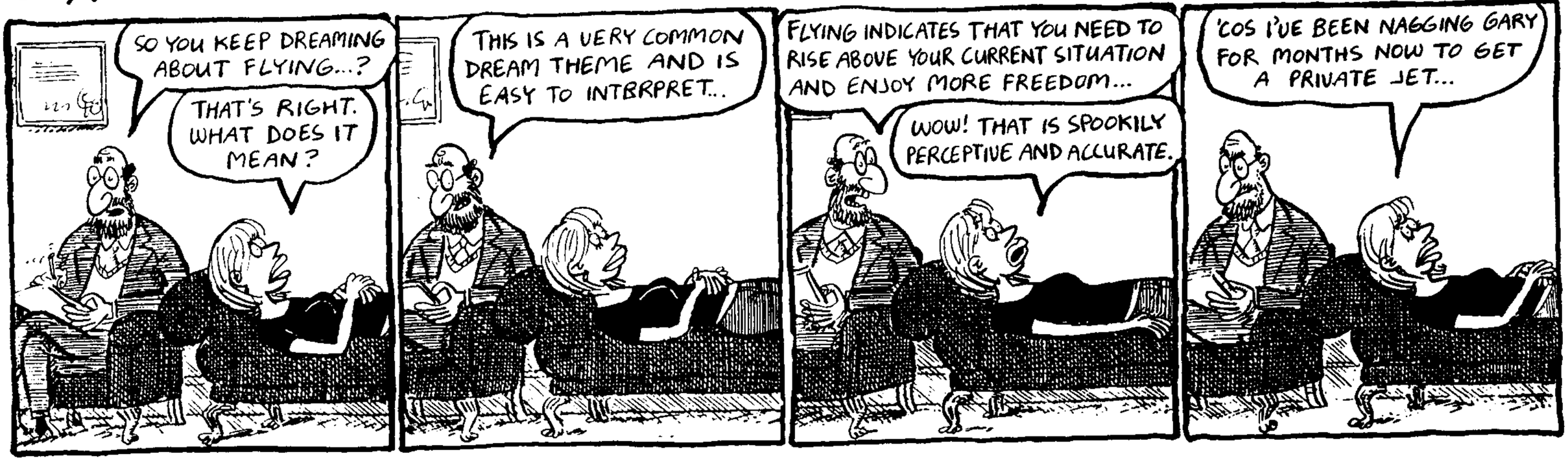
Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with a spoon?

No.

NEXT WEEK: Sir Peter Hall.

Celeb

LIGGER


SO YOU KEEP DREAMING ABOUT FLYING...?
THAT'S RIGHT. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
THIS IS A VERY COMMON DREAM THEME AND IS EASY TO INTERPRET...
FLYING INDICATES THAT YOU NEED TO RISE ABOVE YOUR CURRENT SITUATION AND ENJOY MORE FREEDOM...
WOW! THAT IS SPOOKILY PERCEPTIVE AND ACCURATE.
'COS I'VE BEEN NAGGING GARY FOR MONTHS NOW TO GET A PRIVATE JET...

BRON BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

AUBERON WAUGH, whose long-running Diary was one of the Eye's best-known and most successful features, has died at the age of 61.

He joined the magazine in 1970 after a three year stint as political correspondent of the Spectator. When he was sacked by the then editor Nigel Lawson he transferred his allegiance to the Eye – something he had been wanting to do for some time.

He began by writing an almost-serious political column with factual items about the Prime Minister, Edward "Grocer" Heath, and his boat. But the page soon took on a more satirical look, including a series of "Private and Confidential Letters" which purported to be written by the Grocer to Waugh. A surprising number of readers were taken in and thought them genuine.

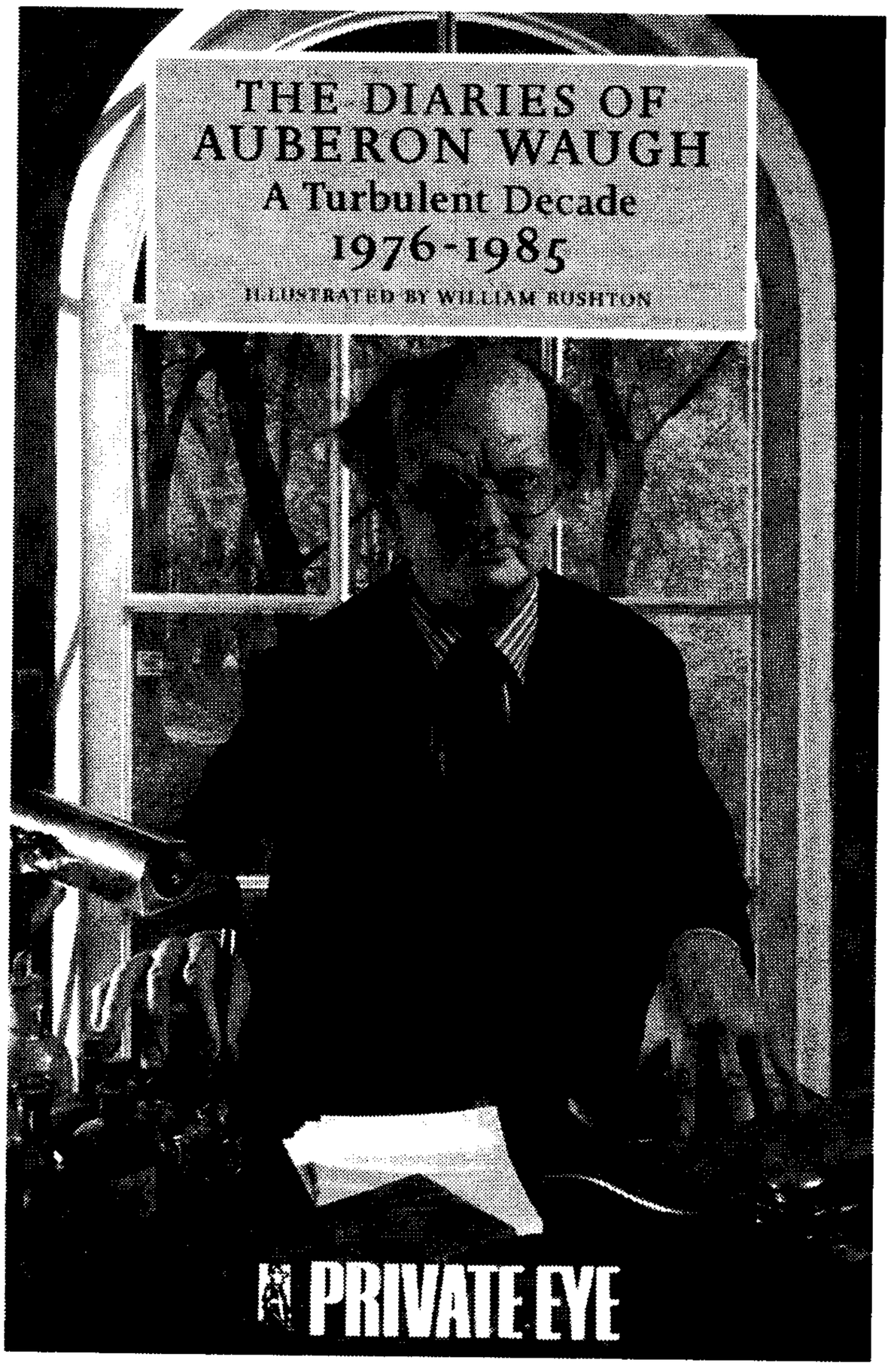
The Diary began as a parody of a Sunday Times feature written by Alan Brien and was headed by a picture of Bron wearing a false beard.

This was later dropped as the feature developed its own character. Bron was fortunate to acquire the perfect illustrator in Nicolas Bentley (Chesterton's godson and the illustrator of Belloc and Beachcomber). When Bentley died he was succeeded by Willie Rushton who remained, until his death, a staunch friend and ally of Bron's.

Richard Ingrams

AUBERON WAUGH
1939-2001

Eric Hands



Model by Luck and Flaw. Photograph by John Lawrence Jones

FEW THINGS would please Auberon Waugh more than that his death should be commemorated by an earnest attack on him in the Guardian by one of his vast menagerie of bêtes noires, Ms Polly Toynbee.

"Bullseye!" he will be rejoicing from his place on high. He wrote his Diary in Private Eye from 1972 to 1985, giving rein to an extraordinary, heat-seeking talent to put into print whatever would upset the greatest number of people at any given time. "However ephemeral it is bound to prove," he later wrote, "I suspect it will remain my proudest achievement."

Oddly enough, though most of their dramatis personae have been lost to oblivion – who on earth is or was Alan Brien, Norah Ballsoff (née Beloff), Tony Holden, Captain Eric Grounds, et al? – the diaries themselves remain an extraordinarily vivid monument to the follies of an era. Seeking to explain them to an American audience when they were published there not long ago, he said that they were the "first example of British and, indeed, world journalism specifically dedicated to telling lies".

Yet they are much, much more than that. In 1969, after witnessing at first hand the plight of the Biafrans at the hands of a federal Nigerian government armed by Britain, he became convinced, as he wrote in his autobiography, "of the wickedness of politicians. In their quest for power and self-importance, to compensate for whatever feelings of social inadequacy or sexual insecurity, they are prepared to perpetrate something which is hard to distinguish from mass murder, if they think they can get away with it..." This lent a furious edge to his comedy, though he never allowed this fury to creep into self-righteousness, which he saw as the cardinal sin.

In the Diaries, the Waugh persona – an omniscient, all-powerful figure, not unlike God, or at any rate a black sheep second-cousin of God – is privy to all the secrets of the great and the good, forever taking tea with the Queen to discuss the possible beheading of Mark Phillips, or pondering sex-changes with Edward Heath. By this means, Auberon Waugh creates a parallel world, at once more colourful and more grotesque than our own, and immeasurably funnier too. He once wrote that he hoped his readers would see that "life can be a much more interesting place with a tiny bit of effort to transform it". Waugh has now gone into the world of light, but his transformations remain with us: thanks to him, politicians seem more self-serving than once we thought, the social services more bossy, the police more clod-hopping, the Toynbee *opinionistes* more priggish, the Windsor-Mountbottoms more common and vulgar, the whole lot of them more profoundly ridiculous.

Craig Brown

A SELECTION FROM THE DIARIES

June 15, 1973

AS ONE was going to have to see a lot of young Mark Phillips[1] in the years ahead, I thought I might as well make myself known. So I asked myself down to tea at the Phillips's home in Wiltshire, pointing out that Mark and I were fellow descendants of Edward the Confessor. I also hinted that I might be a big buyer of Walls Ice Cream and all the other disgusting rubbish which "Major" Phillips, the father, apparently has to sell nowadays to make ends meet.

The meal may not have been quite up to the standard of the best. My girl, Mirabel Cecil, said she would have been happier if the pork pies had been served unwrapped, and thought the sausages could have been a trifle more *engagés*. She also noticed that the wooden spoon was missing from the Walls Family Pack, but tea was plentiful and service was prompt.

Anne had just returned from Germany. She did not seem to understand my little joke about Berlin Walls Ice Cream – or indeed anything else I said. It is harder to be sure about her *fiancé*. I thought I detected a slight look of our mutual ancestor Harthacnut in the way he answered my inquiry about sugar in his tea:

"I suppose it was after Badminton, really."

Mark is apparently under orders from the highest level to say nothing except "I suppose it was after Badminton, really" until they are married. This must add enormously to the strain on an engaged couple. Badminton is a well known game involving shuttlecocks, but I don't see what it can have to do with the Royal Romance. Most people prefer to take a bath after Badminton.

After tea, "Major" Phillips tried to interest me in a consignment of 200 gross choc ices. They were only slightly sub-standard – a few had been found to contain fish heads and other picturesque additions – but he was prepared to let me have them at a very favourable price, having taken such a liking to me. I made my excuses and left.

December 11, 1973

FURTHER light is thrown on the fascinating debate about Captain Eric Grounds's trousers in today's newspaper. Grounds, it will be remembered, was best man at Princess Anne's wedding and shocked my colleague Jilly Cooper[2] (who's seen a thing or two in her time) by his tight trousers which appeared to make him walk oddly.

Then an indignant lady wrote to say Jilly was wrong: Captain Grounds-for-Divorce only walked like a crab with wet pants because he was wearing spurs, for some reason best known to himself. Today brings an amazing letter from the controversial Captain himself.

He rebukes Jilly for "trying to be witty in a scathing sort of way", but makes the astounding confession that these trousers are, indeed "considerably tighter than any other pair, military or civilian, which I own." He reveals further that he has made a practice of wearing these trousers at formal occasions over eight years, and boasts that he has "never experienced any embarrassment when required to sit down."

Nobody is interested in whether he is embarrassed or not. What we want to know is why he chose his tightest pair of trousers to wear for Princess Anne's wedding. Was the Palace informed of his decision in advance? Had the Home Secretary, with his anxieties about "soft porn", been consulted? Why was he wearing spurs, and can trousers which are too tight harm a man's physical development? This is the sort of thing the *Insight* hacks should be investigating, instead of attending ridiculous conferences in Brighton.

December 28, 1973

A LETTER from Mr Norris McWhirter, editor of that indispensable and beautiful publication, the *Guinness Book of Records*, in answer to my suggestion that the achievement of Mr Cyril Connolly in never having masturbated at the age of 18½ (see *Enemies of Promise* by C. Connolly, Deutsch £2.75, p. 250) should be recorded as a wholesome example to future generations.

Mr McWhirter, who has spent a long time researching Connolly's claim, refers me to Professor Darlington's study of the subject in his *Evolution of Man and Society*, where it is pointed out that among the 900 million male humans there are some with almost nil libido. So it's unlikely that Connolly holds the record, but I still think it was a jolly good show on his part.

April 25, 1974

TODAY David Frost[3] is 35. Yesterday, Andre Previn[4] was 45 and the Duke of Northumberland, 60. All that is brightest and best in this country of ours is growing older. How can we stay in the game?

The opportunities are there, of course. I wonder how much the *Sunday Times* has paid Jan Morris[5] for the very wonderful, searing story of how she changed sex. It is little known that I am the only human being in the world who has changed sex and then changed back again.

My reason for changing sex in the first place was a general feeling that at 34 it was time for a change. My reason for changing back was the ghastly boredom of women's conversation after dinner. If Dame Harold Evans or Mr David Astor disputes my claim I am willing to submit to a medical examination in their presence, which will prove that the change-back has been complete in every particular without even a scar to impair the classic proportions of my private parts.

If, on the other hand, they shirk this challenge, one can only draw one's own conclusions about the genuineness of their interest in the surgical sciences.

November 15, 1975

AMONG the many absurdities of the new Roman Catholic "people's meal" which has replaced the old Mass is a stage direction for everybody present at a given moment to give his next door neighbour the Kiss of Peace.

Obviously, this was thought up by some repressed old pervert in the Congregation of Rites as a means of getting people into church, and it has produced nothing but embarrassment. The Stage Directions do not specify how far one can go, and it has become common for fighting to break out all over church at this point, with screams, noises of tearing clothes and knickers flying in the air. This is especially the case in places like Taunton where sexual passions run high.

Now a ruling has come, from the Archbishop of Southwark, Mgr Cyril Cowderoy (he is not to be confused with the Anglican Bishop known as Moscow Mervyn) in an *ad clerum* to the clergy: no person in the congregation is bound to give or accept the Kiss of Peace, and it must not include physical contact.

Swingers will condemn the venerable Archbishop, but I can assure them it is no joke for sensitive young men like myself who have what I suppose can only be called a certain physical attractiveness to the opposite sex when we suddenly find ourselves held in a bear-hug by some toothless old bag of an Irish meths drinker who smells of fried cabbage and vomit and burst sewers. There are those who feel that this is just what religion is all about, but I can't help feeling it detracts from the community atmosphere.

January 13, 1977

THERE IS a photograph in today's *Daily Express* of a plump, homely, middle-aged woman in slacks and bedroom slippers sitting on a sofa. She is not topless or anything like that, but I find myself eyeing her appreciately and wondering if we have not perhaps met somewhere before.

Then I look at the caption and find myself reeling back in amazement: "A relaxed Mr Heath at his home." It says much for Jean Rook's tact – or perhaps for her shortsightedness – that she conducted the interview without apparently noticing anything different.

I suggest it is time the *Daily Express* bought Miss Rook a new pair of spectacles.

March 6, 1977

MY NEW YEAR's Resolution to take a friendly interest in the *Observer*'s efforts to improve itself suffer a setback when I find myself being violently sick all over an article by Clive James. He is writing about that great philanthropist and very wonderful man Sir James Goldsmith.

Oh dear. So soon after breakfast. Peering through the remains of a fine haddock kedgeree, I see the great intellectual and very wonderful journalist Sir Clive James Goldilicks is worried

1. After many denials, the engagement between HRH Princess Anne and Lieut. Mark Phillips had been announced. 2. A journalist.
3. A television 'personality'. 4. A popular conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra. 5. A writer, b. James Morris, she changed sex and name in 1973.

Continued Over

that Goldsmith (sic) may have compromised his position as would-be patron of great intellectuals and very wonderful journalists by his court action against *Private Eye*'s distributors:

"For just this reason, he might find that the intellectuals he wants to associate with might not want to associate with him. One of the things that makes intellectuals intellectuals is that on the whole they really do put principles above expediency... He will build them a forum, but they will stay away. A pity, because he would have been a welcome patron."

Personally, I doubt whether Goldsmith will worry himself too much on that score. Now I must ask my poor wife to clear up the mess.

May 6, 1977

GOOD NEWS for the religious revival. The clotted blood of St Januarius, the fourth-century martyr and patron saint of Naples, has liquefied again.

Even more remarkable is a discovery by doctors at King's College, Denmark Hill, London. In a project financed by the World Health Organisation, they have found that an extract from the urine of Italian nuns, called Pergonal, allows infertile women to have babies without the risk of multiple birth.

For my own part, I never doubted the miraculous property of nuns' urine. Where the nun is Portuguese, her urine may be used in place of anti-freeze in motor cars. Make friends with a German nun, and she will show you unusual ways of polishing silver.

January 23, 1978

THE QUEEN was most interested in some photographs which I showed her from today's *Daily Express* – of a Saudi Arabian commoner being beheaded after his wife, a princess, had been shot for daring to marry him. But she was not in the least bit amused when I started making pointed remarks about her own son-in-law, Captain Mark Phillips and his bride, the Princess-Dame Anne Phillips.

Never mind. She has been absurdly protective of her daughter throughout the whole disgraceful episode, and somebody had to tell her. It ill becomes us to mock the Saudis when we think how much we have lost through neglect of traditional practices. But with a little pressure from my friend Faisal Alhegelan, the Saudi ambassador, all can still be put right.

August 5, 1978

NEWS OF Jeremy Thorpe's arrest with three others breaks like a thunderclap over the Languedoc countryside. There is dancing in the streets, ceremonial rabbits are cooked and groups of peasants with lanterns are to be found wandering the lanes far into the night, singing at the tops of their voices and beating the hedges with staves.

All these men are probably quite innocent of the vile crimes of which they stand accused. But it certainly adds to the gaiety of nations to make them prove it.

March 5, 1979

TO THE House of Commons. Not for the first time I thank heaven I am not an MP, having no idea which way to vote on Maureen Colquhoun's Protection of Prostitutes Bill.

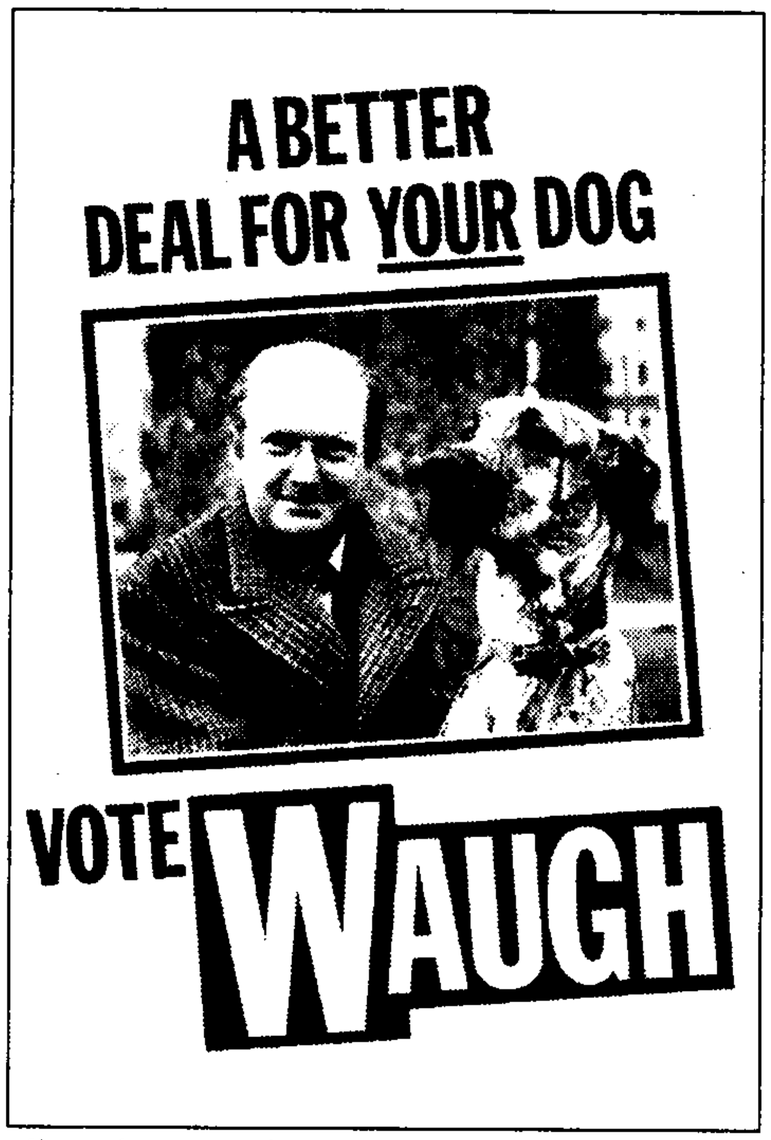
At first glance it might seem an obviously benevolent measure, but my doubts start in the course of Ms Colquhoun's speech when she reveals that the present laws "ensure that the incompetent prostitute, the working-class girl, is the one who gets into trouble. Successful and competent prostitutes operate very well within the law."

It is another sad fact that these incompetent or working-class prostitutes, being somewhat dirtier, tend to give one the more frightful diseases. Should prostitution (or "therapy" as it is now called?) be left to properly brought-up girls of the middle class?

June 21, 1979

THE VERDICT. Thorpe declared not guilty, as we all knew he would be. How could it have occurred to any of us for a moment that he was anything but innocent?

Speaking for myself, I think it may have been something to do with the double-breasted waistcoats he wears. At my school, prefects were



allowed to wear these absurd garments as a badge of office. So many of them were hypocrites, sodomites, and criminal psychopaths that I understandably jumped to the conclusion that Jeremy Thorpe might just possibly be one, too.

Now we know otherwise, perhaps he will consider wearing more conventional clothes in the future.

August 1, 1979

THE BEST THINGS on television this summer are the National Health Council advertisements warning parents not to over-feed their disgusting, football-like, toothless children.

Over half the population in Britain is overweight. The main reason is that it sits in front of the television all day, watching advertisements.

Eric Hands

This is the average diet of your typical toothless, spherical, 14½-year-old British child, usually of indeterminate sex:

Breakfast: 4 Crunchie bars; 3 fish fingers; 1 pkt coca-Cola flavour Spangles; 1 tin condensed milk; 2 btles Fanta.

Elevenses: 3 Mars bars; 2 artificial cream buns; ½pt peppermint-flavoured milk; 3 pkts Monster Munch multi-flavoured crisps.

Luncheon: 3 fish fingers; 2 Twix bars; 1 tin fruit salad; 17 tea biscuits; ½pt brown sauce; frozen peas.

Afternoon subsistence: 2lb Super-Bazooka chocolate flavour bubblegum cubes; 1 tin condensed milk; 2 small btles strawberry flavoured Lip-Gloss.

Evening meal: 7 fish fingers; ¾pt tomato ketchup; 1 tin fruit salad; 2 btles cherry flavoured Panda pop (guaranteed to taste like penicillin); 9 digestive biscuits; frozen peas.

TV snacks: 17 Mars bars; 2 pkts Birdseye cake mix; 1 pkt raspberry jelly cubes; 1 old rubber balloon; 3 cigarette ends; 2oz (approx) dog shit; 1 tube toothpaste; 1 can Pepsi-Cola; 1 elastic band.

Needless to say, there is nothing wrong with this diet, which contains everything a growing child needs. It is watching television advertisements which causes the trouble. That is what makes these NHC advertisements the only effective piece of satire which television has yet produced.

June 14, 1980

TODAY is Arthur Askey's 80th birthday. What a grand little chap he is, to be sure. I send him a collection of old cigarette cards, two bottles of stout and a monkey skin with a message of congratulations and thanks that he has not decided to come and spend his retirement in the West Country, like so many great-hearted little old people from the North.

For the Queen Mother's 80th birthday later this year we are sending her a parcel of Good Boys, the doggie sweets to which she has apparently taken a fancy. They are much healthier than Kit-e-Kat, which can be bad for the breath.

May 11, 1981

TODAY I leave the Westminster Hospital after three weeks of severe illness brought on by laughing at the sight of Vanessa Redgrave as Isadora Duncan on television.

A sad little *cri-de-coeur* from Jean Rook, loveliest of all the *Daily Express* columnists, under the heading GIVE US A BREAK PLEASE:

"Can't newspapers please tear the 'Yorkshire' label off 'The Ripper'... Won't somebody give us a break and remember that Yorkshire also produced pudding and Boycott. And me."

I was not aware that La Rook was a Yorkshire lass, but it comes as no surprise. She is part of the great invasion of Northerners who took over many key points during the 1960s.

Most of us are beginning to feel we have suffered from these people long enough. Perhaps Ms Rook has lost touch with the folks back home, the dismal left-overs after 70 years' emigration from the region, but I personally feel it would be more appropriate to refer to Mr Sutcliffe quite simply as "the Yorkshire".

June 9, 1981

FRIENDS OF Peter Sutcliffe, the 34-year-old Yorkshire, are wondering what grounds he has in mind for his Appeal after confessing to so many yorkshires in the past and with the obvious intention of yorkshiring again as soon as he gets out.

I think he might claim, as a lapsed Catholic, to have been misled by the Second Vatican Council, like Bobby Sands, Raymond McCreesh and the rest of them. For several weeks I've been trying to compose a letter to *The Times* exposing the

fiendish Roman Catholic Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle, called Hugh Lindsay, who agreed with Cardinal O'Fiaock that to describe the hunger-strikers as suicides – or IRA killers as murderers, for that matter – "greatly over-simplifies a complex moral situation".

My problem is the opening. Since Dame Haroldo Ghastlysides first turned up to work at *The Times* in a track suit one obviously can't address the Editor as "Sir", let alone "Dear Sir". "Dear Dame" is facetious while the simpler form "Dame, my attention has been drawn..." – sounds a trifle peremptory.

September 21, 1981

LAST NIGHT, unable to sleep for worrying about badgers, I watched Glenda Jackson in Ken Russell's *The Music Lovers*. Hideous woman, dreadful film. One can't really blame Tchaikovsky for preferring boys. Anybody might become a homosexualist who had once seen Glenda Jackson naked.

Since she has been kind enough to show it to us, I must remark that she has a most unusual configuration to her pubic hair. It seems to grow in a narrow tuft, like the hairstyle of the Last of the Mohicans. I wonder if Ms Jackson has any Red Indian blood. If so, it might explain why there are no more Mohicans.

January 1, 1982

NEW YEAR's Honours and the Prime Minister has once again refused to award Peregrine Worsthorne the knighthood he so richly deserves. Instead she "honours" Steve Ovett and "Seb" Coe, the two athletes who taunted the enslaved masses of Eastern Europe and disgraced their country by prancing around at the Moscow Olympics.

I was never among those who felt that the two should be hanged on their return from the Soviet Union, but I did feel very strongly that they should have their passports cancelled and be forced to spend the rest of their lives there. At the time Mrs Thatcher agreed with me, but she was overruled by Soviet agents in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

April 29, 1982

ON MY return to Combe Florey I am surprised to find a signed copy of Captain Mark Phillips's new book *My Romps With Angela Ripoff* (published by David and Charles and Tim and Julian at £8.95).

It is not entirely devoid of interest. At the time of his wedding he reveals he was so nervous that he fouled himself and had to change trousers with his best man, Captain Eric Grounds-for-Divorce. This explains much which puzzled us at the time.

Now he is happiest when giving Baby Susan her bath or playing football with his four-legged son Peter Phillips. Or so he says. But then he also claims to like cuddling his wife, the Princess-Dame, in front of their television set. Oh, yeah. If people believe that, they'll believe anything. Go on, Captain, try pulling the other one.

December 10, 1982

MORE HORROR stories about the treatment of old people. A gang of thieves in St Albans has been giving them drugged tea and then robbing them while they slept. Or so it is claimed.

The reason why old people are at risk nowadays is that they are so rich. When their pension was only a few shillings a week, everybody left them alone. Now they are to be seen hobbling away from the Post Office every Monday morning carrying great fistfuls of £5 and £10 notes, even my fingers begin to twitch.

Something must obviously be done about this epidemic of granny bashing, and the first thing is for the Government to stop giving them so much money.

September 1, 1983

FOR SIX weeks my only contact with the outside world has been a copy of the *Daily Telegraph* rushed to Southern France by aeroplane, motorbike and every resource of modern technology to keep me up-to-date on world affairs.

Today's arrival brings a horrifying picture of Princess Michael of Kent taking thirty square inches at the top of the front page. She is holding two young Burmese cats to her bosom. The *Telegraph* solemnly announces they will replace Kitty, a Burmese cat whose dead body was found squashed (allegedly run over) three weeks ago.

"Of course, they will never replace Kitty," says the 'Princess', "but I am absolutely delighted with them."

I feel it is time I returned to England. In my absence, this unattractive daughter of a former hairdresser seems set to take over the entire country. Soon she will start bullying the Queen into granting her whole menagerie the style and precedence of a marquess's younger son.

Then, when these two animals have been squashed or allegedly run over, she will turn up in an even bigger photograph on the front page of the *Daily Telegraph* with four of the brutes. My country needs me.

October 13, 1983

AT THE Young Conservatives Ball in the Winter Gardens I find myself unexpectedly closeted with Margaret Thatcher, whom I have not seen since she came to a *Private Eye* lunch over ten years ago.

She obviously expects me to ask her to dance, but it would be as much as my reputation in Fleet Street is worth to be seen dancing with her so I make my excuses, saying I have a particularly violent attack of AIDS. Also, I was rather hoping to find someone younger and juicier, although it might be rude to say so.

Instead I ask her way she has not yet adopted a sensible suggestion in George Gale's *Daily Express* column – Pungent, Penetrating, Pissed – and sent Grocer Heath to be overlord of Ulster in place of James Prior. With a bit of luck, he might get blown up, I explain helpfully.

She replies that she has to wait until the Kincora Boys Home Scandal has been laid to rest before sending another bachelor to Ulster.

February 6, 1984

SO. Princess Anne now emerges as a cross between Mother Teresa and Grace Kelly. I don't care. In this tiny corner she will be preserved for the nation as the Princess Anne we always knew and loved, whose poisonous spittle could stop a camel in its tracks at 20 paces and blind a Press photographer for life at twice the distance.

Here at least she will be remembered with her grinning, speechless husband who wets himself whenever you whistle at him, her enigmatic four-legged son "Peter" and the mysterious Baby Susan who is said to have grown a long yellow beak, black feathers and to croak like a raven.

May 14, 1984

FOR SOME months now I have been corresponding with the editors of the Oxford English Dictionary about the derivation and etymology of the English verb "to pilger".

Observing that is sometimes used in the sense of employing extravagant and emotive language to make a bogus political point, they ask if there is any connexion with the fact that Queen Victoria, in the privacy of Osborne, used to refer to her Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, as "Pilgerstein" (*vide Palmerston* by P. Guedalla, Puttnams, 1927).

No, the word obviously originates in the German stem *pilger–*, meaning a pilgrim; hence *pilgerfahrt*, a pilgrimage, *pilgermann*, any Australian heart-throb reporter who earns more than £60,000 a year by championing the underdog.

One final unsettling point has been put to me by an American scholar living in Mexico: the briefest glance at the etymology of pilger/pilgrim (twelfth-century Provençal *pelegrin*, Latin *peregrinus*) leads one instantly to *peregrine*.

This is surely the last, locked door of Bluebeard's Castle. I dare not go further in terror of the possible discovery that my beloved Sir Peregrine Worsthorne, the suave, silver-haired Belgian thinker and Jon Pilger, the blond bombshell from Bondi Beach, are really one and the same person.

November 15, 1985

A SUMMONS to the executive penthouse suite where Lord Gnome has retired since losing all his money in his foolish libel action against a Welsh solicitor.

Where once the intoxicatingly delicious scents of Avant l'Amour and Après l'Amour vied with each other over the merry laughter of young Sloanes and the tinkle of champagne glasses, all is now quiet. White-robed attendants wear face masks and rubber gloves as they push his Lordship around in a wheelchair whose rubber tyres make no sound on the walnut parquet.

We face each other for a while, the silence broken only by the terrible clicking of his eyes as they roll around in his head.

"Waugh," he says, he who used to call me Peregrine and once gave me his Pekinese puppy to play with, "Waugh, you have been attacking me in the press, on radio and on television. You have betrayed the great trust which I reposed in you..."

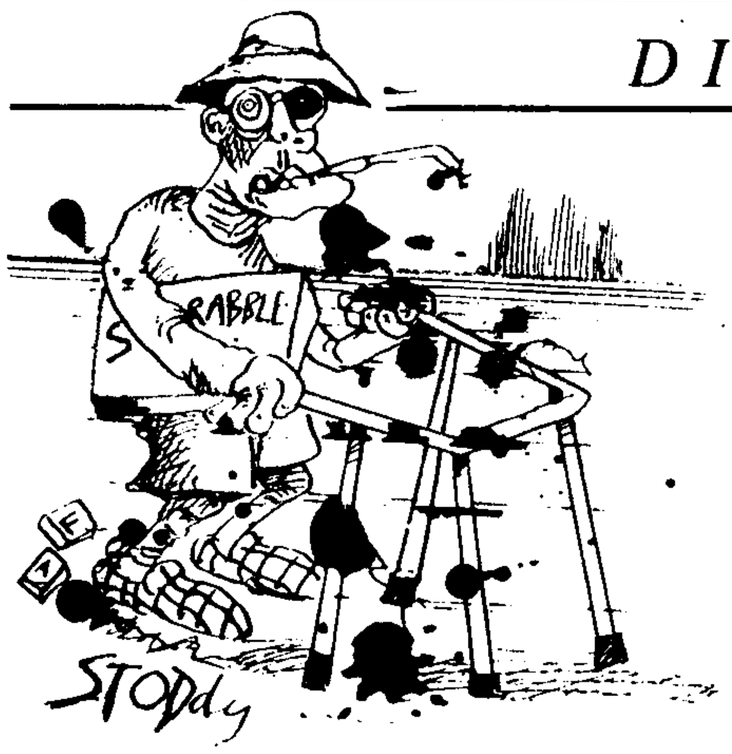
Is it my imagination, or does a slight German accent creep in as his Lordship's voice rises to a scream?

"Unt ferzer more vee haf not zold ein single copy off your Diaries. You are seeked, fired, dismissed. Get out off mein haus!"

A serene Malaysian nurse gives him an injection to the arm, and two beautiful smiling Filipinos hurry forward to see if his nappy needs changing. It is a sad, sad sight.

I am off to Bophuthatswana in Southern Africa for a month or two. No doubt the office will keep me informed if there are any tragic developments.

DIARY



HUNTER S. THOMPSON & RALPH STEADMAN COME OF AGE

Jee-*sus*! I can almost *feel* the little fucker in my hands right now, ready to *wang* and *clatter* around the state, it reminds me of the bright red 3000cc Harley Davidson, a twisted pigfucker of a bike that served me well, brother, in the Year of Our Lord Nineteen Seventy One.

Zimmer – zimmer – zimmer. Hey! That's *some frame*! These Gonzo hands are firmly attached to the frame, ready – vroooooooooooom! – for off. Left hand forward – *right foot forward* – right hand forward – *left foot forward*. Jeez! This zimmer is sending me round in circles on the carpet, like my mind has been *blasted* by doing twenty amyls and the whole *universe* is spinning like a mad, spinning person from the wild and crazy, hey-man-hang-in-there novels of the sacred Frenchman Gus Flaubert. Man, this is the way to travel.

Yeah! The zimmer transports me, kicking like a drug-filled mother-fucking donkey, totally out of control – *judder-judder-judder* – to the games table on the far side of that distant, distant, *distant*, yeah, pretty much distant dayroom.

Hey – *Scrabble!* Weird, eh? You whack your hand into the little green *BAG* and you claw yourself a letter. Then another letter. And another. And another. And another. And – Jee-*sus*! – Then another. And *another*. Seven letters. *Seven!* No getting away from it. All different. But for two 'U's. Whoever wanted two whole goddamn 'U's. What good are two motherfucking goddamn 'U's. Do I *look* like a vacuum goddamn salesman?

Hell, it's getting kinda hot in this place. I untuck my khaki undershirt from out my white rayon bellbottoms and unzip my Che jacket to expose the Smiley face T-shirt beneath to show 'em I don't give-a-damn. Hey! The guy opposite has just cracked himself the *triple letter SCOOOOORRRRRE*!

"If I weren't sick I'd kick your ass all the way, you scumsucking geek" I yell, slamming down my W and my A onto the H to make WAH. "Nine points, *hombre*!" I scream – then the old woman with the horrible green jowls and the fangs jutting out and the trousers soaked with vomit sobs that there's *no such word*!!!

I reach for my goddamn earpiece. Turn up the fucking volume! A single twist – brutal, brutish – does it. "*WAH* dya mean no such word, motherfucker?" I scream – and Doctor Gonzo, High Priest of Art, lives to fight another twisted frenzy of a dumb-ass day.

Nursey, she says it's *bedtime for Gonzo*, so I strip off my mud-spattered outer garments and reach with my fists for my *GODDAMN JIMJAMS*! Ah yes, I think, and three billion trillion impulses surge like Amyl through my crazy genius rebel brain, *This is what it's all about*. Freak power! I watch my hand – a hand like Joe Conrad's, and there was a guy who suffered more for his art – *my* art – than most, as it picked up the Hot Water Bottle, while the other hand *impregnated* it with b-b-b-b-b-b-boiling hot water from the monster red hot kettle, its cord twisting and turning like an evil black python, crazy with bloodlust.

I zimmer back to my room – total control – and sit on the bed, as beddish and bedlike as every bed I've ever known. I take my fists to the pillows and lay into them like Ali vs Frazier – *plump-plump-PLLUUUMPP!* – before turning to the illustrator Steadman, opening my mouth and telling him to do the goddamn business. Steadman puts his fat Welsh hand into my suckfish mouth and – *twist, twist, turn, turn* – removes my scumsucking teeth. Straight into the glass by the bed – *PLLOOPPPP*!

And so to motherfucking bed.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Pseuds Corner

[Nicholas] Cage can do more by simply exhaling than any actor in movie history; with one nearly silent expulsion of breath, he can express all the existential disappointment of European philosophy.

ANDREW O'HEHIR
Salon

The campaign captures in a visual way Cap Gemini Ernst & Young's essential brand equity of 'entrepreneurial creativity'. It demonstrates that Cap Gemini Ernst & Young has successfully distilled the brand essence of the newly merged company. The campaign is a celebration of having defined the global offer which distinguishes Cap Gemini Ernst & Young from its competitors. This campaign marks a new phase for Cap Gemini Ernst & Young as it continues its aim of achieving global domination in consultancy services.

Creative execution of the campaign was developed with a total campaign budget of $30 million.

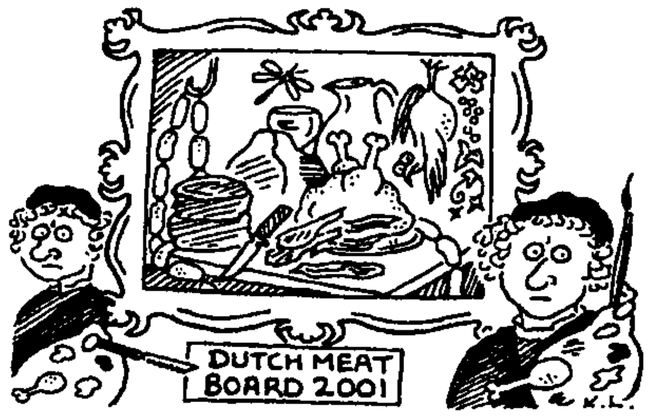
PATRICK BOCCARD (Cap Gemini Ernst & Young Communications Director)
PRNewswire, Paris

The bathroom is personal space, political space, psychic space. It is also a place of ritual and rebirth, of intimacy and vulnerability; the place we know ourselves both as base and divine, of earth and heaven. It is where we arrive at big decisions after misty meditation and stand naked before God and full-length mirrors.

i-D bathroom issue

The art of Dutch quality

The paintings of the Old Masters in the golden age (1600-1700) have put the Netherlands on the world map forever. In museums around the globe the 'Old Masters' still attract hordes of admirers every day.



Against the background of some masterpieces of the golden age we shall paint a picture in this calendar of the quality principles that prevail in the modern Dutch meat industry. Thanks to its PVE/IKB quality control system for meat, the Netherlands is at the forefront of Europe in this field.

Dutch Meat Board calendar 2001

Why OneMonday? Because the name stands for the potential that every new week holds – for the enduring spirit of the entrepreneur and the boundless energy brought to every endeavour. OneMonday is more than its history. It's about the future of who we are and what we expect to be.

Letter announcing agm of OneMonday Group plc

Shopping as a Cultural Activity: Patterns of consumption in the MetroCentre

Wednesday 23 May 2001
with Paul Armstrong BA MA MSc PhD

Shopping is a mainstream cultural activity. This dayschool provides an opportunity to look beneath the surface of shopping. Following an introduction to the *theories* of shopping, an opportunity to undertake a structured observation of consumer behaviour in the MetroCentre will be provided. The day will conclude with reflections on the patterns of consumption observed.

Leeds University, Teesside and North Yorkshire Spring courses pamphlet

CONTRIBUTORS: Dick McWilliams, P.B. Hilling, Neville White, John Howard, Bob Brown, M. Smith.

£10 paid for entries

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS — BY BIRCH

Incredible when you think of Van Gogh— spent his whole life in total obscurity, world famous now he's dead.
The exact opposite to us.
Er...

Literary Review

Moth Balls

The Peppered Moth

Margaret Drabble

(Viking, £16.99)

THE distinguished lady novelist sits in her study. Her pen moves rapidly over the sheets of paper. She is writing. She is assembling words. She is constructing her *thoughts into* sentences. What is she writing about? We must ask ourselves this question. The distinguished lady novelist ("One of our foremost women writers" – the *Guardian*, 1968) is fond of questions. They are there to be answered. They must not be ignored, overlooked, evaded, put to one side.

A three-spot mutant ladybird settles on the distinguished lady novelist's arm. She is writing about insects, about the mitochrondial DNA, about the northern heritage that reaches up to claim her when she least expects it, about women and their place, about the place of women, and placing women, and possibly – where does the fish emerge from? She does not know, cannot tell – women and plaice. All those conglomerations of people, those Smiths and Joneses, and Barkers and Parkers and Drabbles and Byatts, they speak to her, they tell her things, they *communicate*…

The phone rings. It is her sister. They talk, in the way that sisters talk, and in the way that sisters talk, they say things to one another.

"You have read my novel, Antonia?"

"I have. And clearly you have read my novels."

"Which novels are they?"

"The ones about insects and the mitochrondial DNA and our northern heritage. Those ones. And how could you write those things about mother?"

There has always been a space between them, the distinguished lady novelist reflects. Where does it come from? What caused it? What is its origin?

"If you hadn't taken my new biro in 1947, Antonia," she remarks, "none of this would have happened."

The distinguished lady novelist goes back to her work. The yellowing copies of the *Guardian* lie at her side. She is sad. She is not happy. She is… disturbed. What has happened to her talent? Where did it go? Who took it? How can she get it back? She picks up the pen.

I cannot write, my mother could not write, and her mother before her could not write, but my blasted sister can and her clear voice floods the bloody valley.

Books & Bookmen

■ BETTY BOOTHROYD has had the rare honour of an audience with Gail Rebuck, boss of Random House, who has just bought the ex-Speaker's memoirs. "Tell me, Betty," the regal Rebuck inquired, "what do you hope to gain *spiritually* from writing this book?"

Gail had asked the same question recently, with great success, to Martine McCutcheon, another of her celebrity authors. But what impresses daffy soap stars doesn't necessarily work with blunt northern lasses such as milady Boothroyd. "Don't think much of your boss," she muttered to her editor Kate Parkin as they were ushered from Gail's presence.

Indeed. What appeals to Betty is not the spiritual gain from her book but the material reward – an incredible and unrefundable advance of £750,000. How on earth do Rebuck and Parkin expect to earn this back, especially as money from foreign rights will be negligible? "They think Betty could be the new Dickie Bird," a colleague explains.

■ SEEMS we were looking in the wrong place when we found the Books of the Year round-ups free of log-rolling, backscratching and other unsavoury literary chumminess.

The Arts Council-funded *London Review of Books* put in a sterling performance all last year, with its reviewers heaping fulsome praise on books by authors such as David Sylvester, Mary Beard and Frank "Commode" Kermode – all regular *LRB* contributors.

The highlight was when Adam Phillips came to review *Mr Phillips* (neatly circular, eh?) by John Lanchester, a member of the *LRB* editorial board.

"Lanchester's new novel is that hitherto unthinkable thing, a great English Existentialist novel… a great contemporary philosophical novel," claims Mr Phillips the reviewer.

■ FOR AN organisation purporting to be a registered charity, some say Oxford University Press is rather too profit-motivated.

The desire to cut overheads and maximise returns was at the heart of the decision in the mid-1990s to close down its encyclopaedia division and "outsource" production to Market House Books, an Aylesbury-based packaging firm. The standard of the books declined almost immediately.

A prime example is the entry for "Intifada" in the current edition of the *Oxford Paperback Encyclopedia*. "Intifada (Arabic, `uprising') A sustained campaign of violence which began late in 1987, by Palestinian rsidents [sic] against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, after the Six Day War in 1967. Although a peace agreement between the Palestinians and the Israelis was signed in 1993, a number of terrorist acts by Arabs has perpetuated the violence and disrupted the peace process."]

Er… odd perhaps that the mention of terrorism is not counterbalanced by a nod at the extreme retaliation of the Israeli armed forces or the plight of the Palestinian refugees. For this information, Bookworm is indebted to long-time scourge of OUP Andrew Malcolm (see *Eyes passim*), whose website (www.akme.btinternet.com) contains many more examples of "Oxford – the reference books you can trust".

■ SOUNDS like Metro finance director Charles Lumsden is having his work cut out trying to stave off bankruptcy orders. A curious and anonymous note arrived at the *Eye* last week informing us that "CJ Lumsden is to have Bankruptcy order reversed on Wednesday 17th [January]".

It transpires that Lumsden was declared personally bankrupt at the start of the month, and has had to resign his many and various directorships. With a thousand printers, authors and unnecessarily impoverished ex-employees all clamouring for cash, it might not be long before Metro goes the same way.

Meanwhile, it emerges that the Inland Revenue inspector dealing with Metro's £100,000-plus bill is a Mr Swindles. You couldn't make it up…

'Bookworm'

AD NAUSEAM

● LIKE so many significant business decisions, the story behind the Andersen Consulting/Accenture name change comes down to a game of golf.

For three years now Andersen has put millions into the World Matchplay Championships. Last year's winner, the cigar-puffing Ulsterman Darren Clarke, made a gaffe in his acceptance speech that had Andersen's *Überführers* choking on their champagne, when he said: "I would like to thank the sponsors of this event… Arthur Andersen."

Though related, Arthur Andersen (AA) and Andersen Consulting (AC) are very much not the same thing. Arthur Andersen is the firm of accountants; AC the flash consultants. AA does the legwork; AC makes all the profits. And when AA set up its own consultancy arm, this latent hostility soon boiled over into petty bickering among resentful partners, angry that their whizzkids were making the money and some other partner in the thicko beancounter wing was spending it. But what really irked the AC mob was that out on the street, no one either knew nor cared that there was a difference. Clarke's blunder epitomised the whole imbroglio and was beamed to 40 countries at a cost of millions.

So for the second time in as many years, AC has had to embark on a massive, costly rebranding, polo shirts, baseball caps and all. It duly charged Young & Rubicam to buy up roughly a third of all broadsheet ad space and loads of TV.

Accenture's telly spots have proffered the usual pick-and-mix stock shots: grinning people of mixed race, new dawns, foreign climes, hot air balloons, all swathed in a saccharine glow of nauseating mawkishness. It's the life is a journey, you're standing at a crossroads sort of stuff airlines thought they had made their own.

The press work is little better. From March a legal ruling says the Andersen Consulting name has to be dropped altogether, so for three months we get ads caught between two stools, trying to plug the silly new name but also reminding us of what went before.

The real interest lies in why on earth anyone would think that the man on the street gives two hoots about empowering himself or his family – we might want cheap grub and a better motor, but who needs to nip out and pick up some outsourcing?

But this is advertising as bombast and powerplay: the message is not just "here's what we do" but rather "who cares what we do when we're so rich we can buy up the nation's media in its entirety." The new name – sorry, "wordmark" – comes with what AC calls an accent over the t of accenture. It is, in fact, a "greater than" sign, indicating how consultants consider themselves innately superior to every business they deign to save.

SNIPCOCK & TWEED
BEFORE JOINING MI6, DO YOU MIND SIGNING THIS?
MI6
NOT AT ALL...
OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT
IT'S SOMETHING TO PUT IN MY MEMOIRS!
CHAPTER 3
THE DAY I SIGNED THE OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT

In the City

"CRISIS — what crisis?" Labour prime minister Jim Callaghan famously remarked on returning to a fast sinking pound and Britain an economic disaster zone. Soon afterwards the electorate answered him by electing Margaret Thatcher. More than 20 years later the directors of Equitable Life appear to have adopted the same ostrich posture for the same self-survival motive.

The fact that the world's oldest mutual insurer has had to close its doors to new business, slash bonuses and penalise policyholders who understandably wish to take their money elsewhere is — in the view of new chief executive and former finance boss Chris Headdon — "sad" but not "a disaster or a crisis". Furthermore Headdon smugly told the *Financial Times* (12 Jan): "I think blame is really the wrong way of looking at it."

Such breathtaking arrogance and insensitivity would have done justice to the Bourbons, rulers of France when Equitable was founded in 1762 who, it was said, learned nothing. They soon paid the price and disappeared. So too will Equitable. For sadly it was exactly that same arrogance which has plunged the society into technical insolvency.

Yet Headdon — who with his predecessor Alan Nash, must carry a large chunk of the blame — still doesn't get it. But then he still has his well paid job even though one million or more policyholders can now expect much smaller pensions which for those close to retirement is very much a crisis. And that assumes that there is a rescue which ensures Equitable does not disappear into the guaranteed annuity rates (GAR) "black hole" that actuaries Headdon and Nash allowed to threaten the society's survival.

Policyholders may recall Headdon's confident statement last year when seeking re-election as a director. They will also recall how Nash and president John Sclater brushed away the need for a policyholders' representative on the board, preferring such giants of business success as Jennie Page from the dome and Peter Davis from the National Lottery. But now we can see why. Ignorance was bliss for those Equitable insiders who knew the truth.

Headdon joined the board in 1999 after 21 years with the society. He explained how he had been working in the "central actuarial area" since 1984, by when Equitable had been selling the GAR policies which were to bring it down since 1958. They continued to be sold until 1988.

"Since that time I have been privileged to contribute to the actuarial management of the office and to help promote the principles of fair distribution and cost effective management which characterise the Equitable's approach to with-profits business," he proudly declared. So much so that from 1997 Headdon was first the all-important appointed actuary and then general manager-finance charged with "enhancing the Equitable's financial management".

Now the appointed actuary has a statutory duty to check that an insurer/assurer can protect and deliver on its policyholders' "reasonable expectations". This duty is supposed to override any team player loyalty to the board. Any failure or problem is supposed to be reported not just to the board and corrected but also to the policyholders plus the City and professional regulators.

Policyholders would be forgiven for thinking that as their appointed actuary Headdon, like his predecessors, has a lot of explaining to do given his seeming silence/acquiescence over the looming GAR timebomb which was ticking ever louder through the 90s as he rose to prominence.

As he is almost certain to be summoned to appear before the treasury select committee to explain why there is no crisis, perhaps he should be asked whether he ever raised any questions in keeping with his statutory obligations about how Equitable proposed to escape the GAR implosion? If so, what was the response? If not, why not? Did Equitable ignore his suggestions? If so, what did he do?

Why was the GAR problem not flagged in the accounts before those for 1999 when Equitable's weasel-worded bid to escape the guarantee had lost in the court of appeal? Why was there no reinsurance or hedging plan to cover the estimated £1.6bn liability? Why was the society gambling its entire future on a legal opinion? Was the problem drawn to the attention of the regulators and fellow actuaries before 1998 when the treasury was alerted and immediately concerned by the impending GAR court case? Whose idea was it to go to court to escape the guarantees? Did the treasury encourage this suicidal course?

The facts suggest that far from protecting policyholders as he was required to do, the ambitious Headdon was concentrating on not rocking the Equitable boat so as to ensure he continued to climb ever higher up the slippery management pole. Now that the boat is sinking, no wonder Headdon suggests blame is the "wrong way" to look at his role.

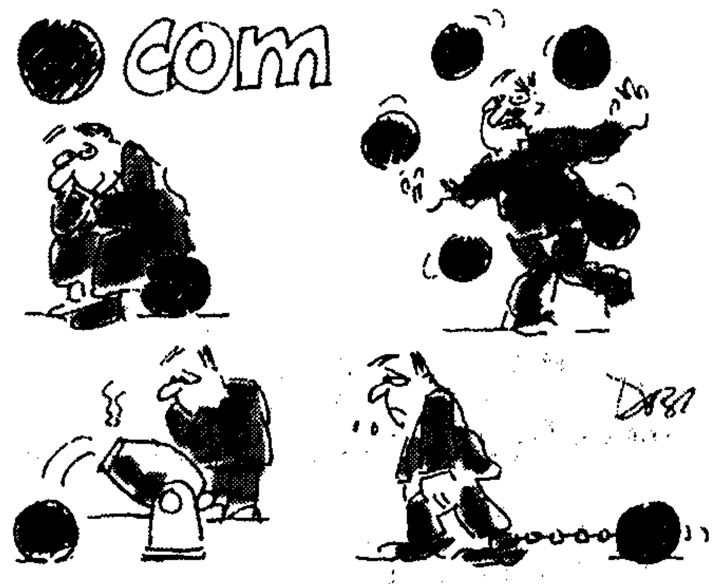
Given that Equitable stopped selling GAR policies in 1988 there was clearly a recognition among its actuaries such as Nash and Headdon by then that there was a problem — the guaranteed rates were rapidly exceeding falling interest rates. That situation worsened through the 90s as annuity rates slid from double to single digit levels. Yet still the society stayed silent.

However, a GAR policyholder has pointed out to the *Eye* that clearly by 1995 the alarm bells were ringing loudly because his policy report for that year suddenly included a new warning note signalling that because of the cost of the GAR the final bonus would be adjusted to take account of the bill for the guarantee and the fund available on retirement might equally be cut from the projected figure. Yet still actuaries like Nash and Headdon seemingly went along with the do-nothing policy. Two years later Chris Headdon became the policyholders' protector!

LORD Hamlyn is a man who can well afford to give the Labour party £2m and not miss it. From one property deal alone in recent months one of his companies is believed to have made many times that figure. The profit came from a deal resonant with Old and New Labour connections.

Hamlyn's coup concerned the old Mirror building in Holborn, once home to Mirror hacks' legendary great bank in the sky and also pension pillager and one-time Labour MP, Cap'n Bob. When the Maxwell empire collapsed and the Mirror titles moved to Canary Wharf the site became available.

Hamlyn bought it two years ago from Mirror Group Newspapers for £41m and began a £135m redevelopment with "new" Labour favourites Andersen Consulting as tenants. He was assisted in



the deal by old pals Roger Seelig and Elliott Bernerd, the latter on the lookout for a peerage for good works.

Hamlyn is said to have possibly used capital gains available for tax effective reinvestment to help finance the purchase.

However, by last year with the building almost ready, Andersen Consulting — locked into an expensive and messy divorce with its accountancy twin Arthur Andersen (another "new" Labour groupie) pulled out of the deal. This meant the firm had to buy its way out of the 15-year lease which was said to cost more than £15m a year. How much Hamlyn took to let Andersen out is unknown but it could have been at least a year's rent and possibly much more.

But within three months he had a new tenant. None other than the family firm of his fellow £2m Labour donor Lord Sainsbury. And furthermore J. Sainsbury could be paying a yearly rental of nearer £20m for its new headquarters because of soaring City office rents and scant supply.

As for Andersen Consulting, it has now now taken over all the IT work for Sainsbury. There is even speculation that it could find itself back in the Holborn building.

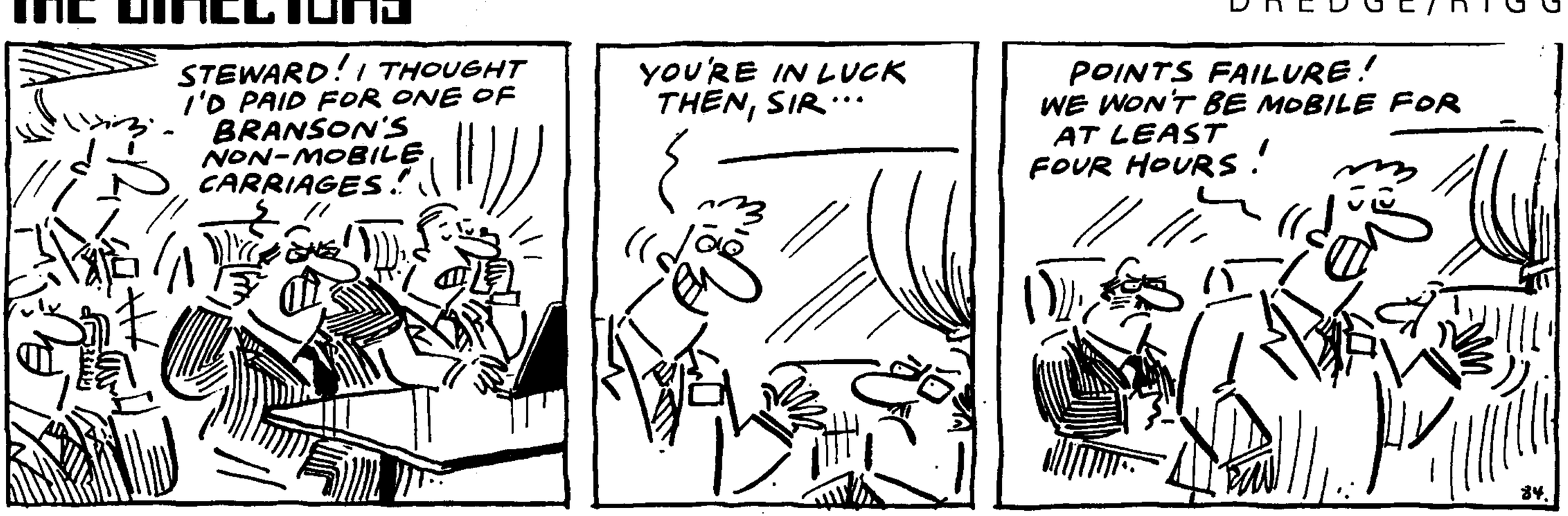
Meanwhile Hamlyn is sitting on a huge profit as the development could be worth over £200m. Doubtless chancellor Gordon Brown, though grateful for Hamlyn's timely donation, will ensure there are no capital gains tax loopholes to minimise the treasury's share of any gain.

DESPITE the hoopla when he arrived in the Commons, Tory frontbencher Archie Norman is proving no talisman for the party's election chances judging by his post-Asda performance in the stock market.

First there was the ludicrous Knutsford hype which saw those who followed Archie and his rich friends wiped out well before he left. Now he has departed from duvet and pillow makers French to concentrate on battling John Prescott over railways and the environment. Just like Knutsford, a shell company that never did anything and went back to being a shell before changing its name to protect the greedy, French soared when Norman arrived in 1999 as the £30,000 a year part-time chairman. The shares hit 115p. But by the time Norman issued a profit warning last September reality had intruded and the price was back to 31p. The day Norman left earlier this month the shares were even lower at 23p. His share options, priced between 35p and 71p, were — like the Tories — well underwater.

'Henry Slicker and friends'

THE DIRECTORS — DREDGE/RIGG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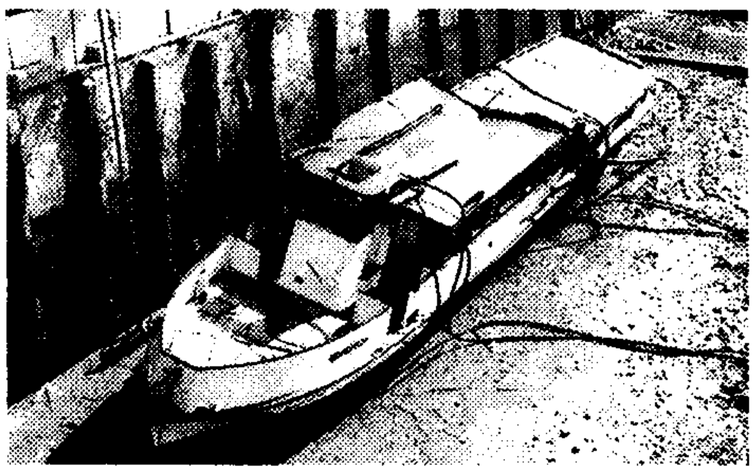

SOLD DOWN THE RIVER

LAST year the government appeared determined to come down hard on companies and directors for serious safety lapses that result in deaths or serious injury to employees or the public.

In May it produced a corporate manslaughter bill, designed to end public concern that even when there has been a preventable disaster with unnecessary loss of life – like the Herald of Free Enterprise sinking (187 dead); the Kings Cross fire (31 dead); the Clapham rail crash (35 dead); or the Piper Alpha disaster (167 dead) to name but a few – it is impossible to bring large companies or their directors to account.

For some time home secretary Jack Straw and deputy prime minister John Prescott have been driving home the message. As Prescott has said: "The law must come down hard on those who persistently put people in danger. Health and safety is a priority issue for those at the top of all organisations and they must be prepared to face the consequences of ignoring the law; in future that could well mean prison."

Er... except that with an election looming and under pressure from "new" Labour's wealthy new friends in industry who are opposed to putting directors in the dock, these words were forgotten and the bill slipped quietly back on to the shelf last month.

Before ministers water the legislation right down and serve it up as part of a new general health and safety bill, as appears likely, they should read the transcripts of the 11-year overdue Marchioness inquiry, which finished in December, for an insight into company and director attitudes towards safety. It might help them conclude – as trade unions, lawyers and pressure groups for victims believe – that only personal liability will provide a powerful enough incentive for many company boards to make safety a priority.

The Marchioness sank on the Thames in August 1989, taking with it 51 young lives, after it was struck by the dredger Bowbelle. An inquest jury, hearing the catalogue of failure that led to the collision, returned a verdict of unlawful killing. But the only person to face trial on minor charges was the Bowbelle's captain, Douglas Henderson, and the jury failed to agree a verdict.

The inquiry, headed by appeal court judge Lord Justice Clarke, heard that Henderson's many failings – drinking, lying about his chequered work record, failing to ensure proper visibility and lookouts and, staggeringly, failing to stop after the collision to try to save some of the drowning Marchioness passengers – was merely the end of a long line of indifference to safety. It was the result of a complete failure right from the top of the Bowbelle's ownership structure (parent company Ready Mixed Concrete RMC UK, down through its wholly-owned shipping subsidiaries South Coast Shipping, East Coast Aggregates and British Dredging) to devise or enforce any kind of formalised operating and safety procedures for the ships.

The captains were largely left to devise their own sailing systems, even after a series of incidents involving their vessels (including a collision with another passenger launch in 1983) and a firm warning that unless procedures changed "it wasn't a case of if a serious incident occurred, but when".

Directors of RMC and the subsidiaries were largely ignorant of their vessels' grim safety record – mainly, it would appear, because no one on the boards had any interest in safety. John Cooper, managing director of RMC at the time of the collision but also on the boards of the shipping subsidiaries, admitted that the smaller companies were seen as "profit centres for the group". His role on their boards, he said, was "not to manage ship-owning activities, but to ensure British Dredging acted in accordance with the wishes of RMC".

Precel Owen, the previous managing director of RMC but a director of the subsidiaries at the time of the collision, admitted under cross-examination by the counsel for the attorney general that not only did none of the directors have responsibility for safety, they didn't actually direct the company.

In fact Mr Owen did not even know how many companies he had a directorship responsibility for. Under cross-examination by Michael Mansfield QC for some of the families he was asked:

Q: In 1989 how many companies were you a director of?

A: I really do not know, sir.

Q: You really do not know?

A: No.

Q: Well just give us a clue. How many do you think you were a director of?

A: Probably 50 odd, I would think.

Mr Mansfield reminded him it was 98, although only about 50 were trading. "I just want to know what you did in relation to these companies," he asked.

Although there was an RMC group safety policy, maritime issues appear to have been totally forgotten. RMC had appointed Julius Stephens as manager of the group's safety department, but he had no experience of, or training in, group health and safety let alone maritime safety. He admitted to the inquiry that he had told RMC he was not "competent to do the job", but the company had insisted because of his managerial skills.

In his closing speech to the inquiry Mr Mansfield accused RMC directors of "arrogance". He said they made a virtue of ignorance of their shipping companies' activities. "The public has a right to expect that companies who hold themselves out publicly and operate profit centres which are their subsidiary companies... that whilst they are making a profit they have an eye to safety as well."

Even now no one at RMC would accept any responsibility or express regret at what had happened said Mansfield. As he put it: "We say the public will find this reprehensible." He urged the inquiry to "change their [RMC's] tune" by adding its weight to demands for a change in the law.

The report is expected next month and smart money suggests it will underline the need for law reform. The families expect no less. Eileen Dallaglio, whose daughter Francesca died in the disaster, said in an emotional closing speech at the end of the inquiry: "As we approach our 12th Christmas without our children, our brothers and sisters, our family and our friends, we ask this investigation to begin the process of fundamental change in legislation which still allows the sector of corporate greed to overshadow responsibility and accountability. Never again must companies such as Ready Mixed Concrete, East Coast Aggregates, South Coast Shipping and Tidal Cruises (which ran the Marchioness) be allowed to operate their vessels along England's waters and high seas with complete and utter disregard for the safety of the general public at large."

Douglas Henderson

WEST MIDLANDS: TRIAL OF JURY

WEST Midlands police were so distressed at a not guilty verdict in a big and expensive drugs trial they proceeded to arrest several members of the jury.

One of them is a mother of three and a former shop manager who wants to retrain as a nurse. She was called for jury service at Birmingham crown in 1999 and served on one of the longest drug trials ever seen in the city. In January last year the jury found the defendants Tony Spencer and David Brandish not guilty on all charges. The defendants were naturally delighted. After shaking hands with the jury members, they accompanied them to the pub for a celebration.

Some months later, in June, the juror (who has never been in the slightest trouble with the police) was visited in her home by West Midlands police officers. They said they were investigating allegations of collusion between the jury and the defendants in the trial.

She was whisked off to Sutton Coldfield police station and, despite her strenuous protests, banged up in a cell. She explained that she suffered from panic attacks but was refused access to her tablets. There was a woman screaming in a neighbouring cell, and the bell for summoning assistance did not work. The questions from the officers suggested either that she knew the defendants or had conspired with them.

All this, she insisted, was utterly false. Before the trial she had never met or heard of either defendant. In the evening she was allowed out on police bail and told to come back in August. Soon afterwards the bail was cancelled and she was told she would not need to return.

She is still extremely indignant at her treatment and wonders why anyone should go on jury service if they run the risk of arrest. A spokesman for West Midlands police told the *Eye*: "The facts are correct. Several members of the jury were arrested but none were charged. It would therefore not be right for me to comment on the allegations against them."

PS: Among those expected to give evidence at the Spencer/Brandish trial was Jogen Rajcoomar, whose story was told in *Eye* 959. He was the first black prison governor in Britain until he was convicted of fiddling his expenses and jailed for two years. When he left prison he was set up by a man he had met in jail called Paul Dawes, an accomplished fraudster and police informer, in a drugs sting supervised by 13 undercover West Midlands officers. Rajcoomar was arrested and charged with supplying the heroin. He pleaded guilty and was jailed for seven years.

In prison, he got a letter from one Tony Spencer, who was in another prison on remand on major drugs charges. Spencer wrote that he had read the *Eye* article and wondered whether the undercover officers in his case were the same as the ones in Rajcoomar's. When the officers' pseudonyms turned out to be the same, Rajcoomar agreed to give evidence on Spencer's behalf. In the event he was not needed but on release kept in touch with Spencer.

On 27 October last year there was, surprise, surprise, a raid at Rajcoomar's house and five officers charged in with a warrant to search for drugs. They found none but took away computer records and bottles of alcohol. Rajcoomar was bailed to appear again in January – but the bail has been cancelled and the investigation stopped. Exactly the same thing happened to Tony Spencer, who is now so fed up with the police he has left the area.

LOCKERBIE: HEATHROW CONNECTION

A DISTURBING theme emerged from the closing submission of Bill Taylor QC, counsel for one of the Libyans accused of murdering 270 people in the 1988 Lockerbie bombing.

Mr Taylor has already made much of the failure of the prosecution to establish the central point of its case: that the suitcase with the bomb was put on a plane in Malta. In his final speech, however, he argued that the bomb was put on the doomed flight at London's Heathrow.

He argued this case systematically, making 20 separate points and pointing out that a terrorist who wanted to destroy the plan was more likely to put it on a plane before it set off on its final flight for New York rather than on feeder flights from Frankfurt or Malta.

He could prove easily that security at Heathrow in December 1988 was abysmal. There were at least three places from where a suitcase could be smuggled on to the Pan-am flight without being picked up by airline staff. The container with baggage for the flight was left completely unattended for three quarters of an hour.

Mr Taylor's most powerful point was his third; namely that "a brown Samsonite suitcase was introduced into that part of the container at the interline area at Heathrow airport". This was highly relevant since everyone agreed that the bomb that destroyed the plane had been packed in a brown Samsonite case. Mr Taylor's main evidence came from John Bedford, a baggage loader at Heathrow airport who was interviewed soon after the bombing. He then gave evidence at the initial fatal accident inquiry in 1991, which was referred to extensively by Mr Taylor. He was asked:

Q: Can you recall whether on 21 December 1988 any of the luggage that you dealt with or saw at the interline shed destined for Pan-am 103 was a bronze Samsonite case?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: Did you see a bronze Samsonite case?

A: A maroony-brown Samsonite case, yes.

Who put the case into the container? John Bedford was certain he did not. What of the other baggage handler of cases for the fatal flight – Sulkash Kamboj? He told the fatal accident inquiry: "I did not place any luggage in the PA 103 tin that day." Though Bedford suggested without any evidence that the Samsonite case might have been put into the container by Kamboj, Kamboj consistently denied any such thing.

Mr Taylor went on to deal in detail with the complicated evidence about the position of the loaded bags in the plane. He concluded that the Samsonite case had been loaded into the plane in almost exactly the position occupied by the suitcase from which the bomb eventually exploded. Mr Taylor also established that there was no other Samsonite bag in the plane. Mr Bedford was called by the crown as a reliable witness. There seemed no reason why he should invent the story of the mysterious Samsonite case which appeared as though by magic in the container of luggage for flight 103.

If the case with the bomb did go on the plane at Heathrow, the consequences for those in charge of the airport at the time are very severe. But what is beyond dispute is that if anyone did put a bag with a bomb on the plane at Heathrow it could not have been either of the two defendants.

SECRECY: WE'RE GAGGING FOR IT...

MORE on the "commercial confidentiality", aka secrecy, surrounding private finance initiatives (PFIs) — the fashionable government policy of financing public projects with a mixture of public funds and big business "investment".

Some months ago the *Eye* reported the curious action of David Lock, Labour MP for Wyre Forest and a junior minister at the lord chancellor's office. He had written to Lord Young of Graffham, Thatcher's crony in the last Tory government and now chair of the governors at University College London, to complain about a paper from the university's school of public policy.

That paper concerned the PFI project for hospitals in Worcestershire – a project which has resulted in the closure of all acute in-patient services at Kidderminster hospital and an electoral rout of Labour in the constituency by supporters of the hospital. Mr Lock did not reveal in his letter that he himself had opposed the hospital project until he became a minister.

Now the school of public policy, and the head of its health policy and health services research unit, Professor Allyson Pollock, are under attack again for another piece of work on PFI: the plans to build a new police headquarters in Cheshire.

Last year the public service workers union Unison commissioned a study on the project from Prof Pollock's unit. In December, Unison sent a draft of the findings to the police authority and asked for comments. The result has been a flurry of furious letters from the police authority clerk and the chief constable to Unison officials and to the acting director of the school of public policy. Their gist is that the data circulated by Unison are "confidential and commercially sensitive" and that the draft report impugns the integrity of police authority members.

In fact the data in the report were taken from the police authority's own outline business case on the PFI project. Perhaps what really annoys the police authority is the conclusion based on the authority's own figures that the PFI project would be about £30m more expensive than if it were funded by the state in the usual way.

Publication of the report has now been delayed because of the threat of legal action by the police authority, and Dr Pollock and her team have been warned to consult the university's insurers before they engage in any inquiry that might conceivably lead to litigation – in effect a gag on academic freedom.

THE NUM AND THE COSA NOSTRA

FOLLOWING the *Eye*'s revelation in issue 1017 that thousands of ex-miners were being fleeced in an industrial disease compensation scam by an organisation whose initial £100,000 funding had come from Doncaster council on the basis of false information, local journalists and councillors were inundated with complaints from old and sick miners who had been ripped off.

They told of claims settled for much less than they merited; inadequate paperwork and overcharging – particularly in cases where claims had been settled but the claimant continued to be charged on a weekly basis. The man who set up the so-called Yorkshire Compensation Recovery Service, David Murdoch, is a paid official of the NUM (COSA No 2 branch), who was handily placed as the chair of the local Labour party at the time.

Local MPs began to wake up after the *Eye*'s story appeared. Barnsley West MP Mick Clapham has attacked Doncaster council for funding Murdoch. Don Valley MP Caroline Flint, whose vulnerable majority depends on many former miners, has asked for an investigation into exactly where the money went.

A number of councillors wanted a debate on the matter, which would have been an embarrassment for their colleagues who are friends of Murdoch and who supported his 1996 application for the hundred grand. An anodyne motion crept on to the agenda of a council meeting last week. However, the item was talked out when five o'clock came round and Cllr Martin Hepworth – a named Donnygate junketeer – supported by social services chair Roni Chapman, moved closure of the meeting. Teatime, you see. Sod the miners!

However, such has been the universal tumult that new council chief executive David Marlow has been forced to announce an investigation into the scandal. He might like to consider the part played by Mervyn Thomas [*see* Rotten Boroughs, page 13] at the time assistant director of social services, who originally recommended approving the grant.

Marlow will also want to examine the sale of 11 Chequer Road, Doncaster, now YCRS's premises, to NUM (COSA No 2) on 22 July 1988 for £28,000 with the help of an £8,700 industrial relocation grant; and its subsequent repurchase by the council on 5 January 1995 for £65,000; and why Murdoch has enjoyed rent-free office accommodation there ever since.

When the delayed debate finally takes place on 12 February Marlow will have to decide on the position of those councillors – including leader Colin Wedd, his deputy Bev Marshall and Chapman – who voted to give Murdoch the money to start up the scam in 1996.

PLYMOUTH HO NO!

THE 270,000 people of Plymouth are unhappy about the plans of privatised company DML to store nuclear reactors from decommissioned nuclear submarines in four different sites round the city.

DML, the largely privatised Plymouth dockyard, is also applying to the Environment Agency for permission to discharge a radioactive substance called Tritium at a 700 percent higher rate than at present.

Tritium is released in the servicing of Trident nuclear submarines. It is highly dangerous and can destroy human DNA when ingested. When Tritium is discharged from the dockyard it can flow into the River Tamar and is also released as a gas into the air. When residents and the local press raised concerns about this, a DML spokesman said the release of nuclear waste into the river was "a small price to pay". Local campaigners, who include former submarine workers, have mounted a legal challenge to try to stop DML from obtaining permission to use higher quantities of Tritium.

DML is a subsidiary of the American company Brown and Root, which in 1985 was sued over its mismanagement of the South Texas Nuclear Project. The company settled for $750m. Brown and Root is part of the Halliburton oil field, petrochemical and nuclear corporation. Halliburton has many military and oilfield contracts, many of them clinched by its former chief executive officer Dick Cheney. Cheney of course is now vice-president of the US. He has promised to put his Halliburton stock options (believed to be worth $20m) into a blind trust.

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EYE QUOTE

A bus company worker has translated the national training manual into plain English because trainees could not understand the jargon. Guy Gibson, of Trent Buses, was praised by the Plain English Campaign for transforming gems such as 'maintain awareness and anticipation of other road users in the vicinity of the manoeuvre' to 'look where you are going', and 'adjust environmental and comfort systems to meet changing conditions' to 'turn the heaters on when it's cold'.
LONDON EVENING STANDARD

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LOST ALL IN FLOODS, uninsured, attacked in street, broken arm, fell down stairs, badly cut other arm. Wife stressed – told me to go. Living now in workshop. Me into depression results of tests, need triple bypass. Barclays foreclosed, taxman chasing hard. NEED £18,000 MINIMUM TO KEEP GOING. Checkable events. All help to A.HOWES, 28 St Edmunds road Northampton NN1 5ET

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TV "DICING WITH DEBT" student victim Daniella still needs £1230. Phone 01460 76814.

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LONDON-BASED male lawyer, 36, with varied interests – seeks woman to share the good things in life. Box 1120.

MALE 30 – at Box 0520.

PASSIONATE and confidante exotic nubian female, 23 seeks cultured gentleman of the world, 35-55 to pamper and adore her. Photo and number please. Box 0220.

TALL, STUNNING, talented 26 year old American – gsoh, seeks non-assertive, educated, professional gentleman for mutual support. Box 1020.

SNOWCAT WANTED. N.Dorset gent, fit 40's, attached but solo skier, seeks stylish lady with stamina and sense of fun to accompany on skiing trip in early March. Full length photo and letter needed for ski pass. Box 0420.

DIVINE, nubian princess, 35, wltm gentleman (+photo) 45-55 for LTR, who desires a paramour to spoil and pamper. Box 2420.

VERY ATTRACTIVE, brunette, 41, divorced, bright, funny, slim, charming – seeks that special guy (maybe attached) for extremely discreet liaisons. Photo appreciated. Box 1820.

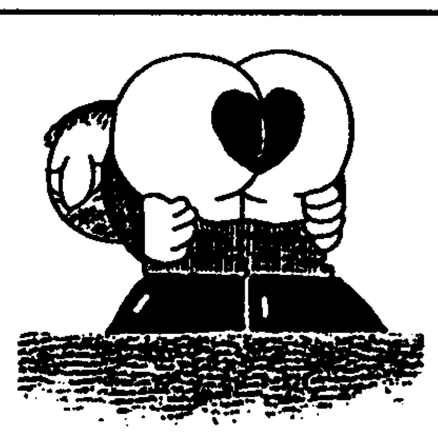
RAVENOUS "GRADUATE", 18, seeks Mrs Robinson, 18-35ish, to be taught facts of life. thegraduate@breathe.com

EXPLORERS TOGETHER... Kind, happy man, 36, genuinely attractive, humorous and fit – seeks spirited woman, 25-36, educated and imaginative, intrigued (as he is) by some less conventional male/female experiences. Mutual respect, consideration and tenderness essential. Cambridge, London, or further afield – s_vashtar@hotmail.com, or write Box 0720.

EYE SEEK

BOX 2613 (October 2000). Your replies have been returned by GPO. Please confirm your address with Private Eye Smalls.

ANN HATCHER 'Blyth Power' – contact RR 01938 555134 re: Train spotting original.



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Ch. d'Issan
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❤ 1998	Ⓜ	£ 240
1997	Ⓜ	£ 210
1996	Ⓜ	£ 280
1995	Ⓜ	£ 270
1994		£ 230
1993	Ⓜ	£ 220

Ch. Giscours
Margaux - 3e cru classé

1998		£ 270
1997	Ⓜ	£ 220
1996	Ⓜ	£ 300
1995	Ⓜ	£ 290
1990	Ⓜ	£ 570
1989	Ⓜ	£ 570

Ch. La Tour de Mons
Margaux - Cru bourgeois

1998	Ⓜ	£ 180
1997	Ⓜ	£ 160
1996	Ⓜ	£ 190
1994		£ 160
1989		£ 320

Ch. Talbot
Saint-Julien - 4e cru classé

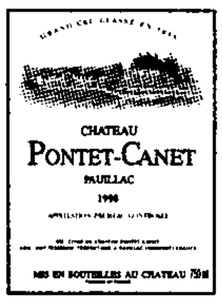
❤ 1998	Ⓜ	£ 310
1997	Ⓜ	£ 260
1995		£ 370
1994	Ⓜ	£ 320
1993	Ⓜ	£ 310
1990		£ 570
1989		£ 570

Ch. Beychevelle
Saint-Julien - 4e cru classé

1998	Ⓜ	£ 310
1997	Ⓜ	£ 260
1996	Ⓜ	£ 380
1995	Ⓜ	£ 370
1994	Ⓜ	£ 320
1993	Ⓜ	£ 310
1992	Ⓜ	£ 260

Ch. Gloria
Saint-Julien - Cru bourgeois

❤ 1998	Ⓜ	£ 240
1997	Ⓜ	£ 220
1994		£ 220
1993	Ⓜ	£ 210



Ch. Pontet-Canet
Pauillac - 5e cru classé

1998	Ⓜ	£ 310
1997	Ⓜ	£ 270
1996	Ⓜ	£ 410
1995	Ⓜ	£ 390
1994	Ⓜ	£ 320
1993	Ⓜ	£ 290
1989		£ 570

Ch. Haut-Batailley
Pauillac - 5e cru classé

1998	Ⓜ	£ 250
1997	Ⓜ	£ 240
1994		£ 240

Ch. Lynch-Bages
Pauillac - 5e cru classé

❤ 1998	Ⓜ	£ 460
1997	Ⓜ	£ 430
1996	Ⓜ	£ 520
1995	Ⓜ	£ 470
1994		£ 380
1993	Ⓜ	£ 370

Ch. La Fleur Peyrabon
Pauillac - Cru bourgeois

❤ 1998	Ⓜ	£ 180
1997	Ⓜ	£ 160
1996		£ 200

Ch. Haut-Marbuzet
Saint-Estèphe - Cru bourgeois

1998		£ 310
1997	Ⓜ	£ 280
1996		£ 320

Ch. La Lagune
Haut-Médoc - 3e cru classé

❤ 1998	Ⓜ	£ 280
1997	Ⓜ	£ 220
1996	Ⓜ	£ 350
1995	Ⓜ	£ 330
1994	Ⓜ	£ 300
1993	Ⓜ	£ 290

Ch. Peyrabon
Haut-Médoc - Cru bourgeois

1998	Ⓜ	£ 150
1997	Ⓜ	£ 120
❤ 1996		£ 160

Ch. Sociando-Mallet
Haut-Médoc - Cru bourgeois

1998	Ⓜ	£ 310
1997	Ⓜ	£ 270
1994		£ 300
1993		£ 280

Ch. Chasse-Spleen
Moulis - Cru bourgeois

❤ 1998	Ⓜ	£ 250
1997	Ⓜ	£ 190
1996		£ 260
1994		£ 230
1993	Ⓜ	£ 220

Ch. de Sales
Pomerol

1998	Ⓜ	£ 240
1997	Ⓜ	£ 170
1996	Ⓜ	£ 210
1995		£ 250
1994	Ⓜ	£ 210
1993	Ⓜ	£ 190

Ch. Grand Corbin-Despagne
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1997	Ⓜ	£ 190
1996	Ⓜ	£ 250
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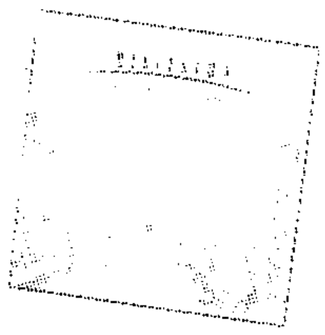

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